No. 308 / DECEMBER 1998

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

- Disney's dolls
- Working for the rat
- The architecture of reassurance
- Inside Walt's world

The Mousetrap

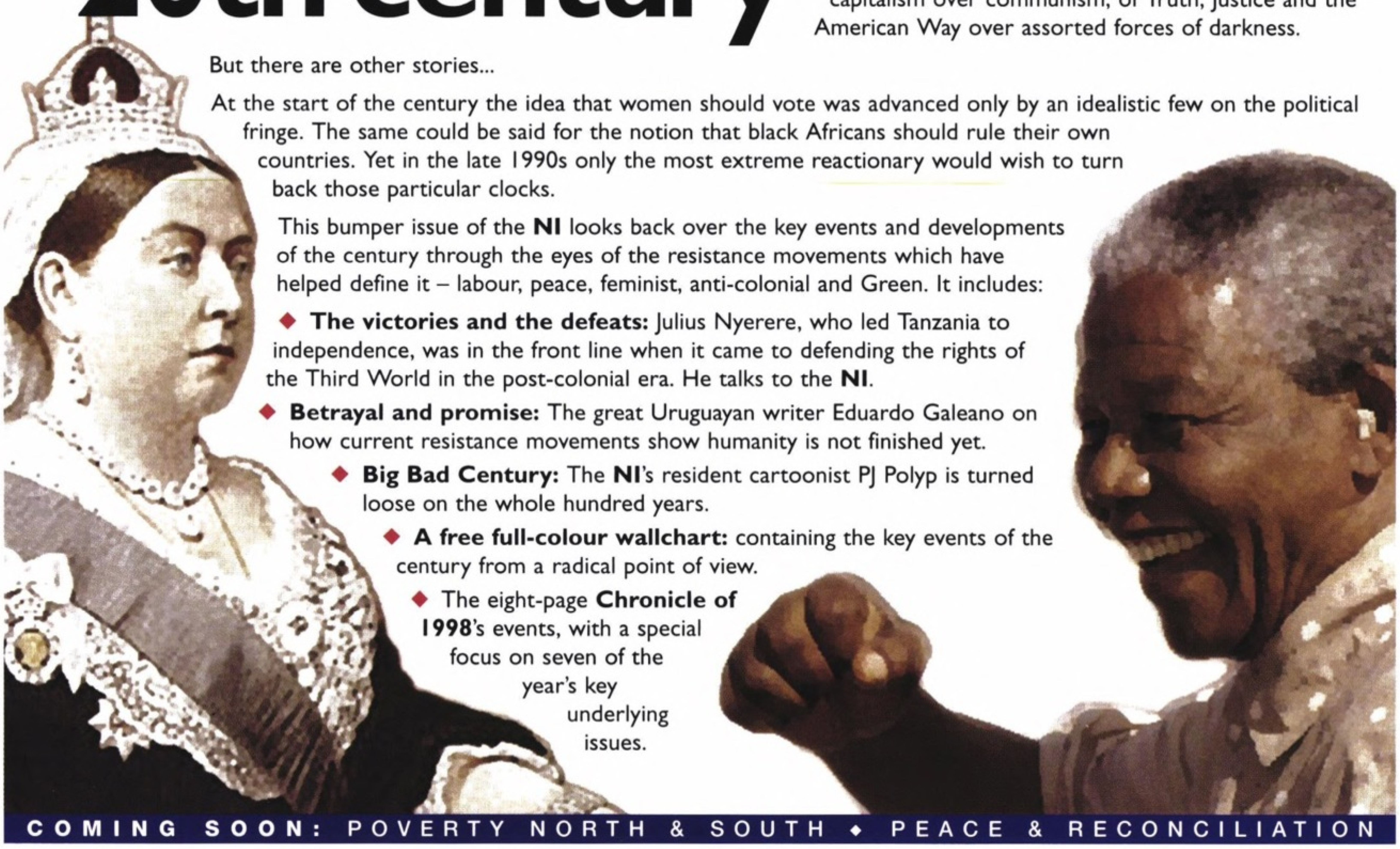
Inside Disney's dream machine

PRICE: UK £2.50 AUS. $5.60 AOTEAROA/NZ $5.50 CANADA/US $4.50 ◆ THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT MONTH

The radical 20th century

Over the next year the twentieth century will be interpreted and analyzed, pummelled and pushed into all kinds of shapes. The loudest noise will come from those claiming that the century's essential meaning lies in the triumph of West over East, of capitalism over communism, of Truth, Justice and the American Way over assorted forces of darkness.



But there are other stories...

At the start of the century the idea that women should vote was advanced only by an idealistic few on the political fringe. The same could be said for the notion that black Africans should rule their own countries. Yet in the late 1990s only the most extreme reactionary would wish to turn back those particular clocks.

This bumper issue of the **NI** looks back over the key events and developments of the century through the eyes of the resistance movements which have helped define it – labour, peace, feminist, anti-colonial and Green. It includes:

- **The victories and the defeats:** Julius Nyerere, who led Tanzania to independence, was in the front line when it came to defending the rights of the Third World in the post-colonial era. He talks to the **NI**.
- **Betrayal and promise:** The great Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano on how current resistance movements show humanity is not finished yet.
- **Big Bad Century:** The **NI**'s resident cartoonist PJ Polyp is turned loose on the whole hundred years.
- **A free full-colour wallchart:** containing the key events of the century from a radical point of view.
- The eight-page **Chronicle of 1998**'s events, with a special focus on seven of the year's key underlying issues.

COMING SOON: POVERTY NORTH & SOUTH ◆ PEACE & RECONCILIATION

New Internationalist

The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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Editorial (North America): Wayne Ellwood, Richard Swift.
Magazine marketing: Michael York.
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Canada/US Editorial: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel: (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.
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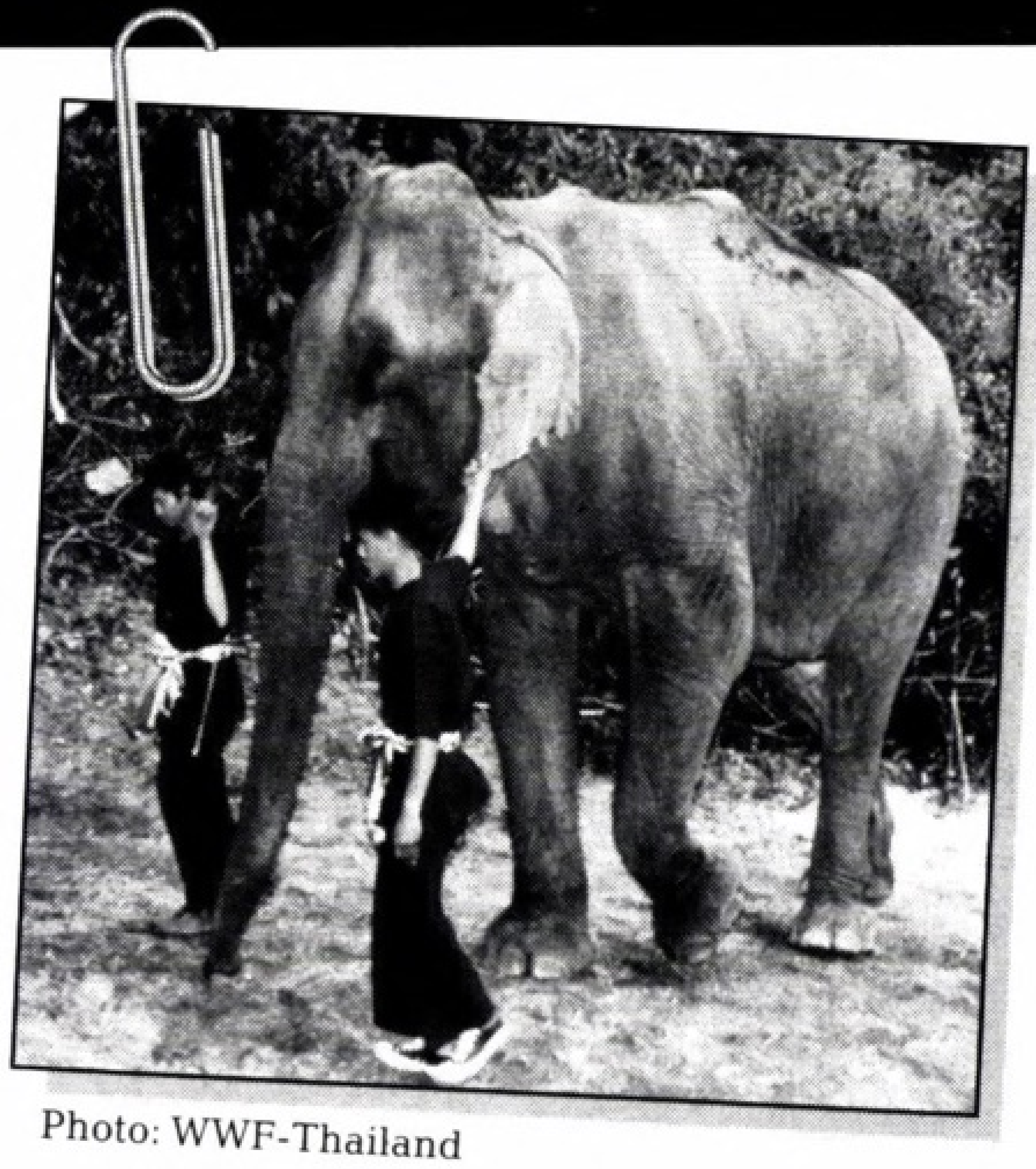

Photo: WWF-Thailand

The Christmas Gift pack contains:
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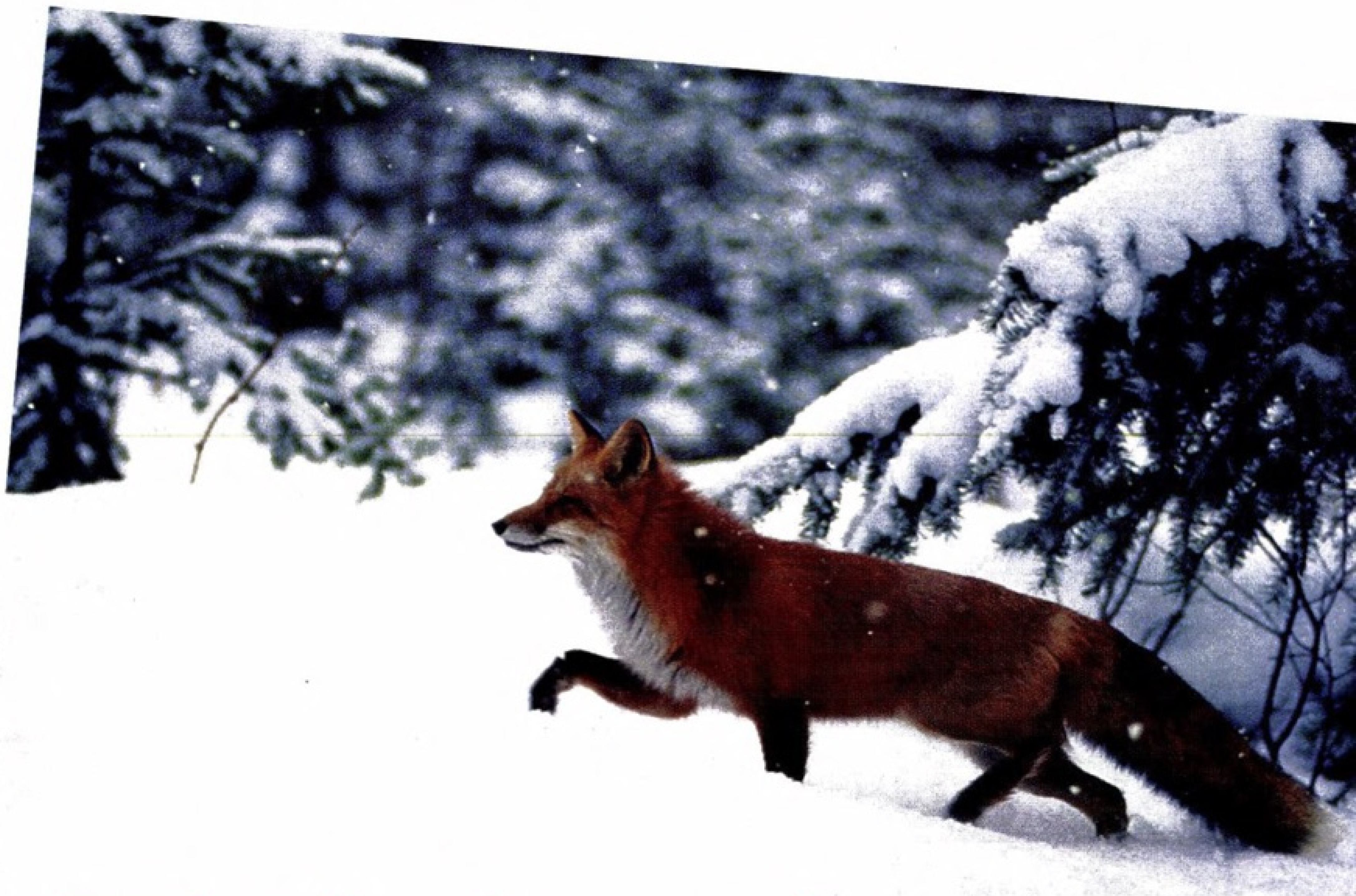

Ethical investment - a blooming business

ETHICAL INVESTMENT is one of the great success stories of the 1990s. When Friends Provident started Stewardship in 1984, it was the only range of ethical unit trust, life assurance and pension funds in the UK. Now, more than 14 years later, Stewardship has attracted over 100,000 customers and has funds under management of around £1 billion, twice the amount of just three years ago. We are also no longer alone. In fact, we are proud to have started something of a movement – there are now over 30 ethical funds available in Britain and the popularity of ethical investment is growing all the time. In America the story is even more inspiring, with $1 trillion (or nearly 1 dollar in 10) invested by funds taking social responsibility seriously. Ethical investment is rapidly becoming a mainstream activity. For example John Denham MP, the Pensions Minister, has recently announced he intends to require all pensions funds to make clear their stance on ethical investment. It also helps that, as our 14 year track record has demonstrated, it is possible to invest responsibly and still enjoy a healthy return on your investment.

WHAT IS ETHICAL INVESTMENT?

If you have an investment, savings or retirement plan, it is likely that some of your money will be indirectly invested in companies on the stock market.

Although companies generate the wealth upon which the economy depends, they are also at the heart of many of the world's most serious problems such as global warming, the destruction of the rain forests, toxic waste and the use of child labour. It is only by changing the way companies work that we can hope to solve these problems. Fortunately, some businesses have already started to show that they can be part of the solution. For example, perhaps the best answer to global warming lies in the use of renewable energy generated by using power from the sun, the wind or the waves.

Stewardship seeks to avoid companies which harm wildlife.

As an investor you benefit from the activities and profit of companies. But you cannot avoid accepting some responsibility for the actions that create those profits. And this is the principle on which Stewardship is based. Research shows that most of us believe that we owe it to ourselves and to future generations to exercise wise 'stewardship' over the companies in which we invest. We should support companies which make a positive contribution to society, and encourage others to cease their harmful practices. Fulfilling this responsibility is Stewardship's aim.

LEADING ETHICAL INVESTMENT FORWARD

As the pioneers of ethical investment in the UK, Friends Provident has a special responsibility for taking the ethical investment movement forwards. The world has changed considerably since we started Stewardship. In the materialistic 1980s few companies were worried about ethical or environmental issues. Now many more are. No less than 80% of the top 100 companies in the UK now report in some form on the environmental impact of their activities. Social responsibility is now a regular item on the boardroom agenda of some of the world's largest companies.

We have always been committed to using our influence as a major investor to encourage better practice, but now that companies are showing that they are more ready to listen and are more agreeable to change, we are in a position to move further and faster than before.

Stewardship has its own separate Committee of Reference to identify and vet companies that satisfy our searching ethical criteria, as well as those that don't. The Committee meets regularly and wrestles long and hard over the appropriate companies in which to invest. Stewardship is committed to use its influence to promote positive change. With the approval of the Committee, and working closely with the fund managers, an Ethics Unit has been established to engage with companies to encourage change in accordance with our ethical policy.

Stewardship seeks to invest in companies which help rather than harm the earth.

We also commission research by the independent Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS), which monitors the activities of current and potential investments.

GAINING FROM GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship's 14 year track record has disproved the myth that profit and ethics don't mix. There is a growing body of evidence that companies which take ethical and environmental issues seriously actually perform better financially. Many companies are finding that improving their environmental performance has helped them also to improve product quality, to reduce costs, to create new market opportunities, and to have better relationships with their stakeholders. Similarly companies that demonstrate a commitment to high ethical standards find it easier to win the loyalty of their employees and the trust of their customers. In short there are convincing arguments that ethics pays. And the more the public demands higher ethical standards of companies, and the more governments regulate to protect the environment and to ensure good practice, the better ethical investment will be.

Stewardship's ethical policy means that only around 40% of the companies in the FTSE All Share Index are considered acceptable for investment. The focus is on smaller and medium sized companies because many larger companies, owing to their diverse activities, are not on Stewardship's list of approved companies. Friends Provident's unrivalled 14 years' experience of managing ethical funds has shown that Stewardship can achieve good results over the long term.

As with all stock market based investments, you should remember that past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance.

WHY HAVE OVER 100,000 PEOPLE CHOSEN FRIENDS PROVIDENT STEWARDSHIP?

Friends Provident was founded by Quakers in 1832 and has gone from strength to strength to become one of the most progressive and successful insurance groups in the UK. We are proud of our origins and the values which lie at the heart of our role in the development of ethical investment. Stewardship was launched in 1984, has the largest ethical funds under management in the UK and is currently available across the majority of the financial products offered by Friends Provident.

Stewardship seeks to avoid companies which pollute the environment.

With over two million individual policies and accounts, the Friends Provident Group manages assets of around £23 billion worldwide. Friends Provident is highly respected in the UK insurance and investment industry, recognised for its comprehensive product range, competitively priced products, quality service and long-term investment performance.

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

You should remember that financial planning is rarely a straightforward matter. It is therefore essential that you seek professional advice before you make any decisions about Friends Provident's products and their suitability to your own circumstances.

Contact your financial adviser or call us on 0800 00 00 80 for more information about how Stewardship can help you make a difference through your savings, mortgage, pension or investments.

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No longer just a trendy fringe, investment in ethical funds is the fastest growth area in the investment industry. It's bound to be. It looks to the long term. Here at St Peter's, we have to-the-second information on the world's ethical funds.

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: DISNEYLAND TOKYO BY **JIM HOLMES / PANOS PICTURES**. MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Disney

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

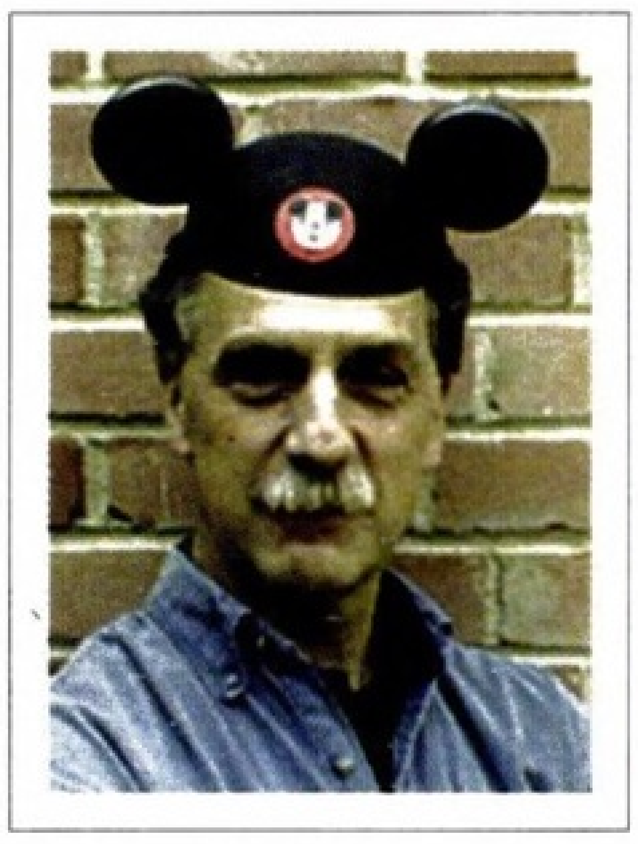
TRUE confessions time. Nowhere in this issue on Walt Disney and the spread of global culture do I reveal the grisly truth.

I am a former Disney addict.

Let me explain: my dad was a furrier, not a very popular job today. But a pretty respectable one in Canada 60 years ago when he first got his training. The fur business was thriving and nobody thought too much about trapping animals to make coats for humans.

I felt pretty lucky to have a dad with such ready access to the pelts of the wild creatures that I imagined filled the thickly-wooded ravines of our suburban neighbourhood.

I felt even luckier when he brought me home a hand-sewn, bona-fide Davy Crockett 'coonskin cap'. I can still smell the stiff grey felt that formed the rounded top and feel the plump racoon tail that hung from the back. I lived in that cap for months and was the envy of my swashbuckling boyhood chums.



That was 1955. Walt Disney's hour-long *Disneyland* television show was already a huge hit in the US and Canada. When the programme presented a three-part saga based on a hitherto little-known roustabout named Davy Crockett, it became TV's first cult craze. Davy Crockett wore a coonskin cap and soon all the kids in North America, me included, were clamouring to do the same.

In the seven months that followed the first Davy Crockett broadcast, millions of coonskin caps and other Crockett paraphernalia were sold – $100 million worth of merchandise in total, most of it licensed by Disney.

Later, my sisters and I used to rush home from school to watch the *Mickey Mouse Club* which ran for an hour, five days a week, from 1955 to 1959. Every afternoon we welcomed Cubby, Karen, Bobby, Doreen, Jimmy, Roy and the enchanting Annette into our homes (ah, Annette, object of unsurpassed boyhood fantasies).

I can still sing every word of the show's theme song : 'Forever let us hold your banner high. Come along and join the club that's made for you and me. M-I-C, see ya' real soon; K-E-Y, why? Because we love you. M-O-U-S-E.'

Like *Disneyland* and later *The Wonderful World of Disney*, the *Mickey Mouse Club* was a hybrid, a TV original which blended cartoons, taped serials and ads. Lots of ads. The famous mouse-ear hats (like the fetching one I'm modelling in the photo above) were first seen on the heads of Disney's 'Mouseketeers'. And the programme was also the first to feature wall-to-wall blurbs for kids' toys.

Something we're all used to at this time of year. Toy companies have been blanketing the airwaves with lavish ads for months now and Saturday morning television is little more than a four-hour session for brainwashing children in consumerism. Just remember, the next time you're being badgered for the latest action toy or stuffed Dalmatian puppy, it all started with Disney.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not one of those sour killjoys who looks down his nose at a bit of harmless fun. I took my kids to the latest Disney animated film while I was preparing this issue. I even went to Walt Disney World, though admittedly it was by myself. Work, you understand.

And I wore the silly hat.

Wayne Ellwood

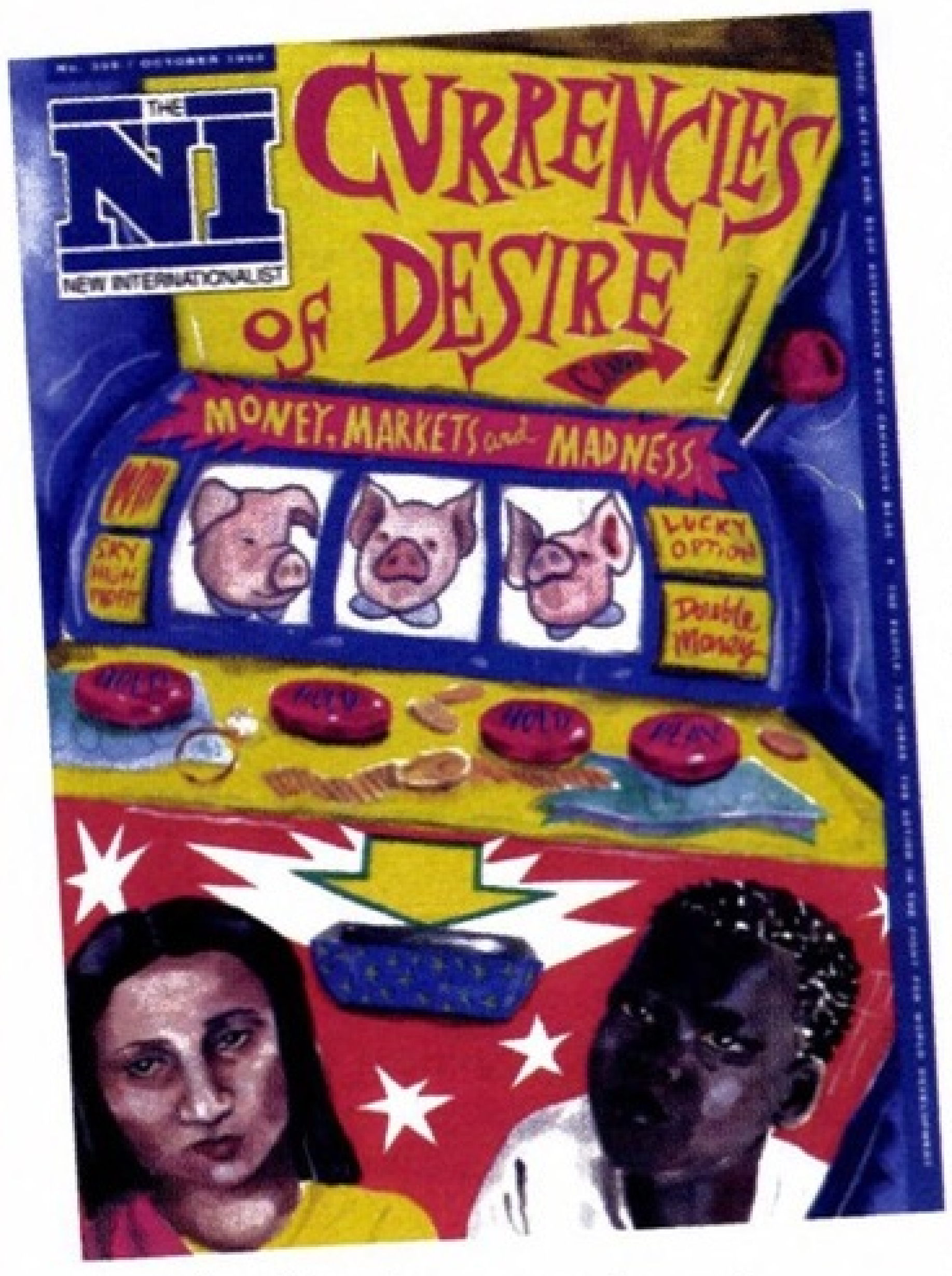
Wayne Ellwood
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Radical ideas

The issue on ***Money*** (**NI 306**) omitted the most obvious alternative of all, namely doing away with money and exchange altogether. The result would not be a system of barter but of free access for everyone to what has been produced.



The profit motive limits production to what can be viably sold, irrespective of what is really needed. And the money system implies a colossal waste of energy in unproductive activities like banking, insurance, bills, tickets and so on.

Freed of these constraints, people would be able to produce for use and take what they needed from the common store. It's a shame these truly radical ideas get little space in the **NI**.

Paul Bennett
Manchester, England

Political affiliations

Not only is David Boyle (***Money* NI 306**) editor of *New Economics* magazine, but also of the weekly newspaper, *Liberal Democrat News*. You should not omit a mention of a writer's political affiliation – readers are entitled to know.

Eric Copestake
Upton, England

Boring virtues

As an expatriate Canadian (Swiss-German ethnic, from the greater Mennonite community), now living in the United Kingdom whose multicultural mosaic throughout history has enveloped intensely regional and local identities into recognizable Britishness, I can hear what Neil Bissoondath (***Migration* NI 305**) is trying to say, but I am afraid he is rather missing the point.

The multicultural ethic in Canada has a longer history than Neil implies. In the late 1950s, for example, primary-school children throughout Ontario were taught that Canada embraced and celebrated different cultures, unlike those 'melting-pot' Americans.

Therein, implicitly, is the seed of a Canadian identity which Neil misses in his argument, but which he seems, almost by osmosis, to have taken on. Perhaps he cannot see his Canadian identity because it is so quiet. I could tell him, however, that the quiet, tolerant Canadian is well-recognized throughout the world, though these virtues, oddly enough, are generally thought of, at least over here in the UK, as inherently boring.

Larry Winger
Hexham, England

Plague proportions

Anouk Ride (***Migration* NI 305**) speaks about cost and GNP benefits from migration as would an accountant, but nothing about the environment and the other plants and animals with whom we share this planet.

There is no doubt that something must be done to reduce our population. Allowing people to immigrate only exacerbates the situation. We should label those who have more than two or three children as selfish thieves, stealing the right of future generations to share our planet. A large part of the blame lies on the doorstep of organized religions. I also believe that relief organizations who give sustenance without a population-reduction policy are exacerbating the problem. However, it is inspiring to see countries like Italy and Spain with the smallest population growth in Europe because of a healthy, educated and rebellious attitude towards that infamous Papal edict on birth control.

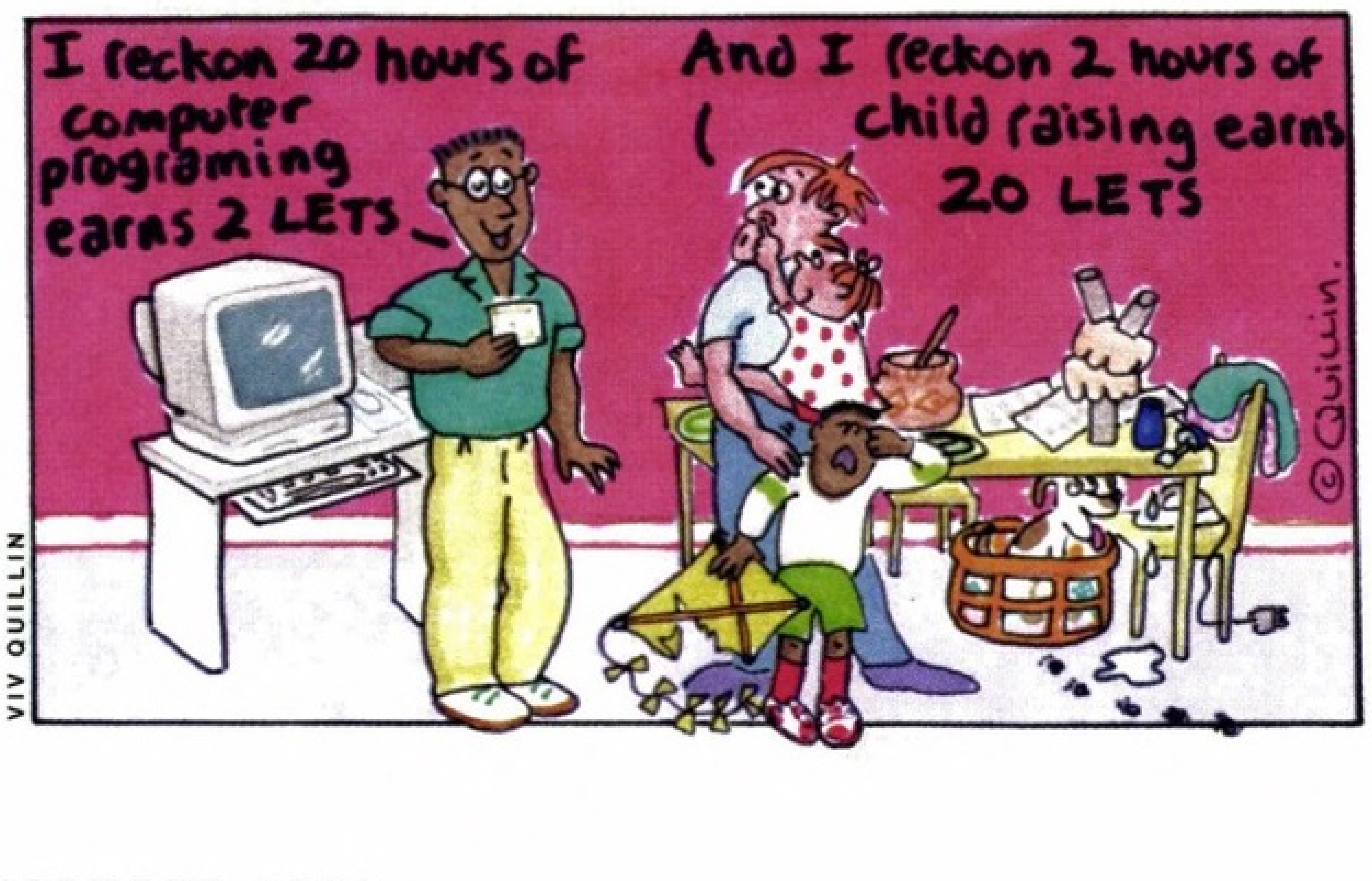
M E Barlow
Sydney, Australia

Human needs

It was particularly heartening in your issue on ***Money*** (**NI 306**) to see you highlighting the development of local economies as a way forward. My one criticism would be in the implication (perhaps understandable in the context) that economies, whether local, national or global, are an end in themselves. They should be a means to the end of meeting *human* needs and assessed on their ability to do so.

My own view on how best to meet human need is to start by recognizing that individuals seek to realize themselves and that this can best be achieved through a network on reciprocal relationships that allow everyone involved to explore and express themselves in ways that are acknowledged and valued by all. That is one definition of community. A local economy (such as a LETS system) is then a means to that end, to be judged as such, and not something to be established because it is seen as a 'good thing' or because the alternative is even worse.

Chris Wright
Altrincham, England


I reckon 20 hours of computer programing earns 2 LETS
And I reckon 2 hours of child raising earns 20 LETS
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Tibetan trauma

I would like to congratulate the **NI** on its coverage of 'reproductive rights and wrongs' (**NI 303**). This issue constitutes a major area of human-rights concern and as a Tibetan woman with a family in occupied Tibet I know only too well the trauma and misery that have been inflicted upon countless numbers of women as a result of China's notorious coercive birth-control policies. Indeed, the mass sterilization and abortion programmes which deny women freedom of choice have now gained the attention of Amnesty International who have rightly condemned such practices as gross violations of human rights. However, for Tibetans these abuses are not just a denial of reproductive rights but part of a centrally directed effort to reduce the Tibetan population to dangerously low levels. Similar genocidal practices suffered by Gypsy and Jewish women during Nazi occupation are thankfully history; but for women across the Chinese Empire they remain a grim fact of life.

Yangchen Kikhang
London, England

No easy options

On your letters page (**NI 301**) Charles Philip writes of 'intransigent dictators'. He should remember that it is just a few years since the US, having found it too costly, decided to stop supporting dictators who were certainly intransigent to their populations.

There is an estimate that by the year 2000 nearly 1,000 billion barrels of the world's total original petroleum resource of approximately 2,000 billion barrels will have been consumed. Exploration may revise these figures but they are still ominous portents. The 'end' of oil is in sight. With that threat it is not difficult to understand why Saddam Hussein has to be vilified when he tries to recover Iraqi territory. The idea is not only to prevent Kuwait being reintegrated with Iraq but for Iraq itself to be made into a colonial producer of oil for the Western Emirs. For neo-colonial and designated colonial peoples there are no easy options.

R Westmaas
Georgetown, Guyana

Abkhazian plight

I was disappointed to read your *Country profile* on Georgia (**NI 299**) with its complete dismissal of the people of Abkhazia and their plight. I visited Abkhazia in 1994 and witnessed the aftermath of the war. Whilst it is true that Abkhazia is in a state of international isolation, I feel this is more to do with the West's desire to remain on good terms with Georgia, with its promise of future access to rich oil and gas reserves, than to any sense of international justice.

The Abkhazians have lived in Abkhazia for many centuries and are believed to be one of the earliest civilizations in this area. Their language is unique and separate from neighbouring Turkic and Slavic languages, with a wealth of literature to support this. The Georgians attempted ethnic cleansing, starting the war by deliberately bombing the record office and removing the Abkhazians' claim to their land.

It seems strange that the **NI** can dedicate an entire issue to the worthy cause of the Saharawis and yet in another dismiss a nation in a similar position.

Sarah Lane
Almeria, Spain

A big thank you to all readers who wrote or e-mailed in with topic suggestions for next year's issues of the NI. We have had so many suggestions that we will not be able to reply to you all, but will contact those whose topics have been chosen.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

Letter from Mongolia

Tea and delight

Louisa Waugh joins in a birthday celebration and has a party of her own.

Kultii was hacking at a huge slab of fresh, moist beef. 'Louisa, it's my birthday on Sunday,' she said, wiping her damp forehead with the back of her bloodstained hand. 'Come over in the afternoon and drink some *chai* [tea] with Delgermaa and Javhlan.'

'That would be good,' I nodded, blowing on my own bowl of steaming black salty chai. 'What time shall we visit?'

I was perched in the spartan but vigorously scrubbed school kitchen which has been ruled by Kultii, Delgermaa and Javhlan for the last 19 years. They bake and boil meals for 85 pupils each day without electricity or running water and have 20 kids of their own to look after between them. The school food is very basic – even potatoes are scarce here. People in these remote western mountains live on rice, flour, meat and milk. But there's always a bowl of tea and usually some hot food for anyone who drops into the kitchen. People in Tsengel village know how to give.

I arranged to meet Delgermaa and Javhlan and left them kneading a mountain of dough for the thick crusty bread they bake on the blackened wood stove. I strolled to one of the cramped wooden cabins that sell flour, rice, soap and a lurid assortment of boiled sweets. I rarely buy this stuff – I don't need to, for every time I browse I am given a handful of sweets or biscuits. The traders spoil me. But now I bought half a kilo of sweets for Kultii.

A couple of sunny, windswept days later I head over to her house with Delgermaa, Javhlan and a posse of local women. We crowd into Kultii's two-room log cabin, gather round the table and pass each other bowls of milky tea. Kultii's table is laden with everything she can afford to buy or bake for her friends – fresh bread, fried dough sticks, sugar, biscuits and dried milk curds.

'Have some more food,' she urges me, 'and give me your cup, Louisa. You need some more tea.'

Mongolians are dedicated tea drinkers. We crouch on narrow stools drinking, nibbling and gossiping. Delgermaa and Javhlan prompt the ritual singing, more women arrive with young, shy children and we get noisier and gulp even more tea.

Kultii, sweating next to her wooden stove and breastfeeding her eighth child, suddenly claps her hands. 'Louisa, did you bring your camera? We need pictures!'

Fourteen mothers rush for the mirror, straightening headscarves, passing a single lipstick back and forth (it's me who is camera-shy here). The table is pushed back against the wall and my friends line up like soldiers. I start laughing: 'No! Act natural!' and snap photos of the beaming group. We toast the birthday girl (who is 41) and wander outside into the autumn sunshine, lingering with the yaks and goats.

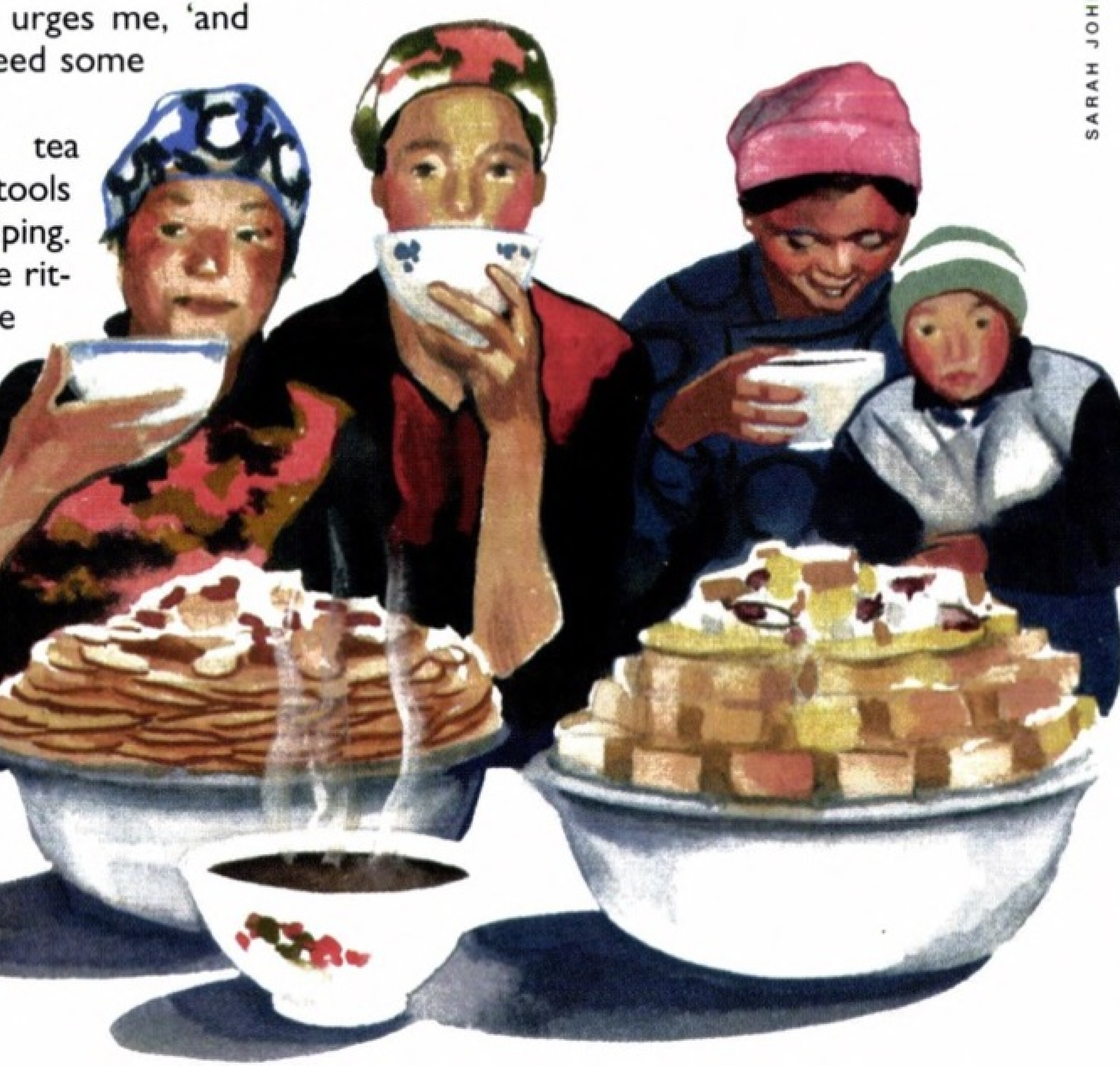
Four days later it is my birthday. By midday my arm is aching from shaking hands with half of Tsengel. People dismount from their horses and camels to greet me. Men, women and children shyly push bouquets of plastic flowers into my arms, give me chocolates, miniature bottles of perfume and bags of those glistening sweets.

Kultii, Delgermaa, Javhlan and my other friends arrange a disco in Tsengel's ancient, generator-powered theatre (there's no electricity here). Two hundred people turn up and we dance all evening. Then, under duress, I clamber up onto the narrow stage, thank everyone in Mongolian – and sing a Beatles song.

By midnight a small group has settled in my felt *ger*, pushed the desk back and presented me with a midnight feast. Kultii's bread, home-made cheese, meat fried in precious onions and, best of all, four fresh apples Delgermaa charmed off someone who'd just been to Ulaanbaatar. Here, where there is so little, I am utterly indulged. We get out the guitar, sway to lilting folk songs and stay up with the stars. I fall into bed at dawn, still slightly drunk.

The next morning I wake up late with a hangover. As my head slowly clears I smile, recalling Javhlan trying to explain to me what the name 'Tsengel' means. I sluggishly reach for my dictionary, and there it is in black-and-white. Delight. ■

Louisa Waugh is a freelance writer who lives and works in Mongolia.



SARAH JOHN

Update

DEVELOPMENT

Capital and kindness

Micro-credit is no miracle

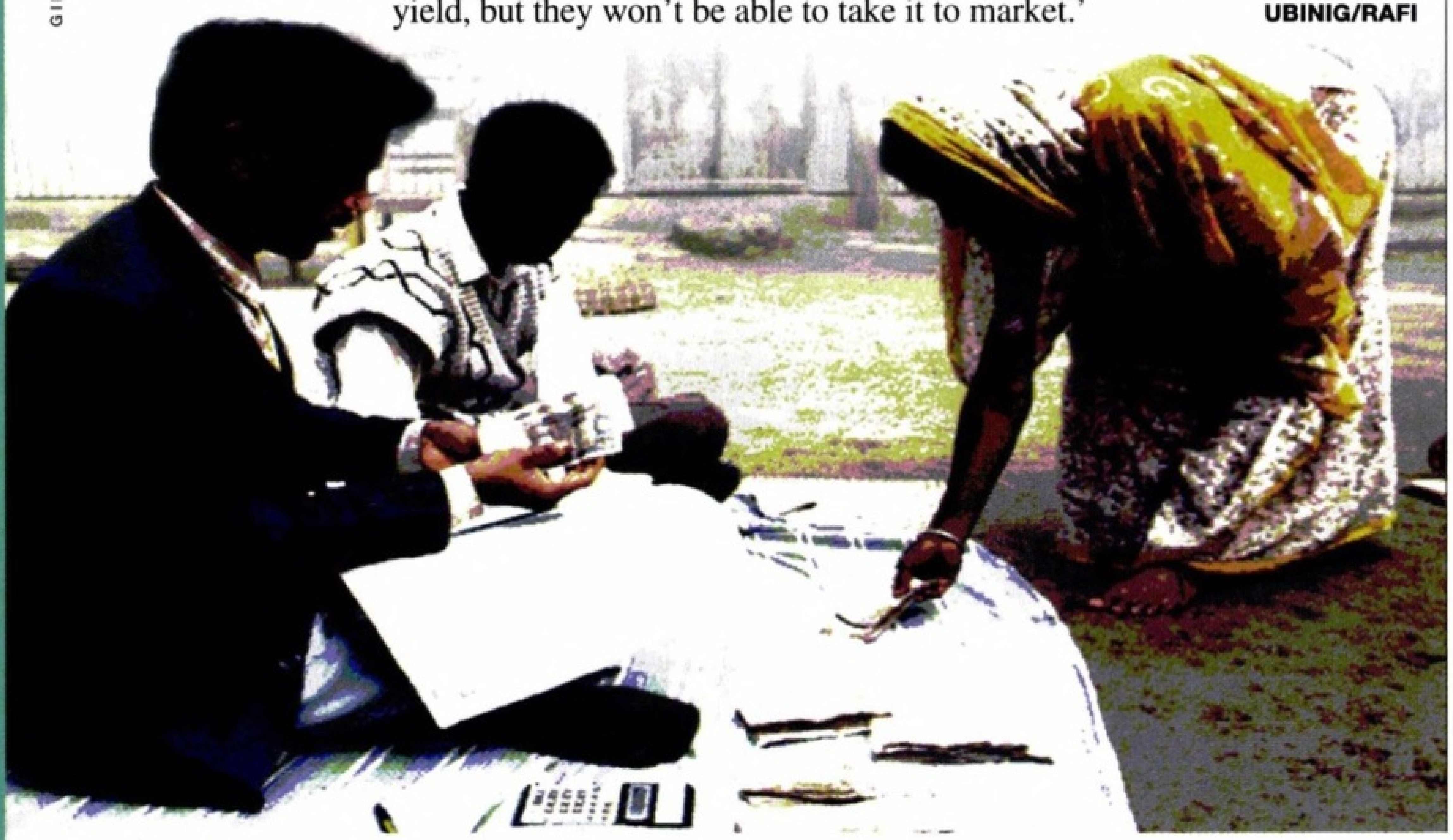
The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which pioneered the concept of micro-credit, has come under attack. Hailed as a development success story, the Grameen Bank allowed the poor to obtain small loans without collateral. About eight million families obtained micro-credit to launch tiny but profitable ventures. Muhammad Yunus, the Bank's founder, has shown that the poorest of the poor will repay their debts 98 per cent of the time – a rate far superior to the record of commercial banks. The World Bank and corporate gurus from George Soros to Ted Turner have flocked to Yunus' side. 'They see him as the proof that a kinder, gentler capitalism can work for the poor,' says Pat Mooney from the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI).

Then the Grameen Bank began planning a relationship with the exploitative agricultural transnational, Monsanto Corporation. The planned collaboration was cancelled due to public pressure. The arrangement would have given the Bank $250,000 to provide loans to poor farmers to buy Monsanto's agrochemical and biotechnology products.

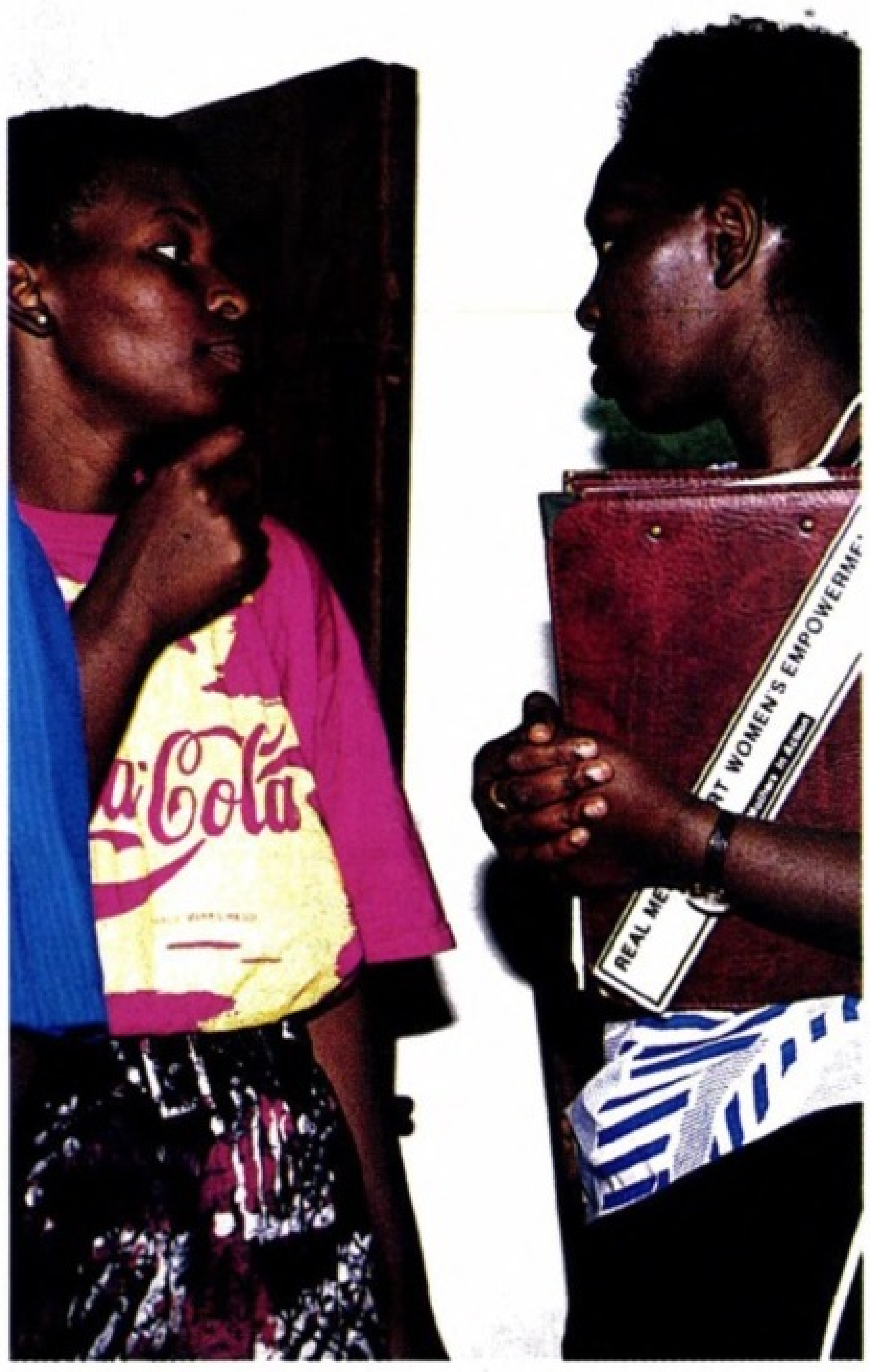
The furore rekindled a range of much wider concerns regarding the role of micro-credit in community empowerment. Many people are concerned that the hype stirred by the World Bank, in its call last year to extend micro-credit to more than 100 million poor families by the year 2000, suggests that micro-credit is seen as a panacea for poverty alleviation. 'Only the World Bank could term the act of placing a hundred million families in debt as "empowerment",' Farhad Mazhar of UBINIG (a prominent Bangladeshi organization) asserts.

One doctoral study, conducted among villagers in Bangladesh, suggests that about two-thirds of the micro-credit loans made to women are ultimately controlled by their husbands, fathers or other male family members. In many cases, the stringent pay-back requirement has forced women to meet their micro-credit obligations by resorting to usurious money-lenders.

Some senior aid officials such as Huguette LaBelle, President of the Canadian International Development Agency, have called for caution in pursuing micro-credit as a solution to poverty. LaBelle insists: 'We've got to be careful that we don't put everything we have in micro-credit programmes and neglect the fact that children in developing countries need to be immunized as well. And you do need those rural roads – otherwise the poor will increase their agricultural yield, but they won't be able to take it to market.' **UBINIG/RAFI**



GILLES SAUCIER / FRANK SPOONER



BETTY PRESS / PANOS

Sisters discuss: Kenyan women are using the courts to challenge wife-beating.

Spouses are sued

A middle-aged Kenyan woman recently sued her husband of 12 years for injuries sustained during an assault. Her court action is one of many breakthroughs in a country where wife-beating or 'discipline' is common.

'Our case load has doubled over the past year, a good sign,' says Julie Koinage, attorney for the Kenya chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers. 'Not that there are more cases of women suing their husbands. But more women are coming forward.'

But judges are usually sympathetic towards male offenders and sentences are light. A female High Court judge recently provoked outrage amongst her peers and others by suggesting marital rape should be against the law. Koinage explains: 'Domestic violence tends to be dismissed as something that happens at home, and which should be dealt with there. But violence is violence.'

Robert O Otani/*Third World Network Features*

Tainted whales

Toxic chemicals used in computers and televisions are accumulating in the bodies of sperm whales in the North Atlantic. Two substances which can damage the nervous and reproductive system, polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) and polybrominated dipenyl ethers (PBDs), were excluded from a ban on chemical pollutants agreed by Europe and North America. Now there is evidence these chemicals are found in many links in the food chain from sperm whales to seabirds to fish. Researcher Jacob de Boer from the Dutch Institute for Fisheries Research says PBBs and PBDs may be as harmful as PCBs which have been found in animals such as polar bears which feed a long way from the industrial source of pollutants.

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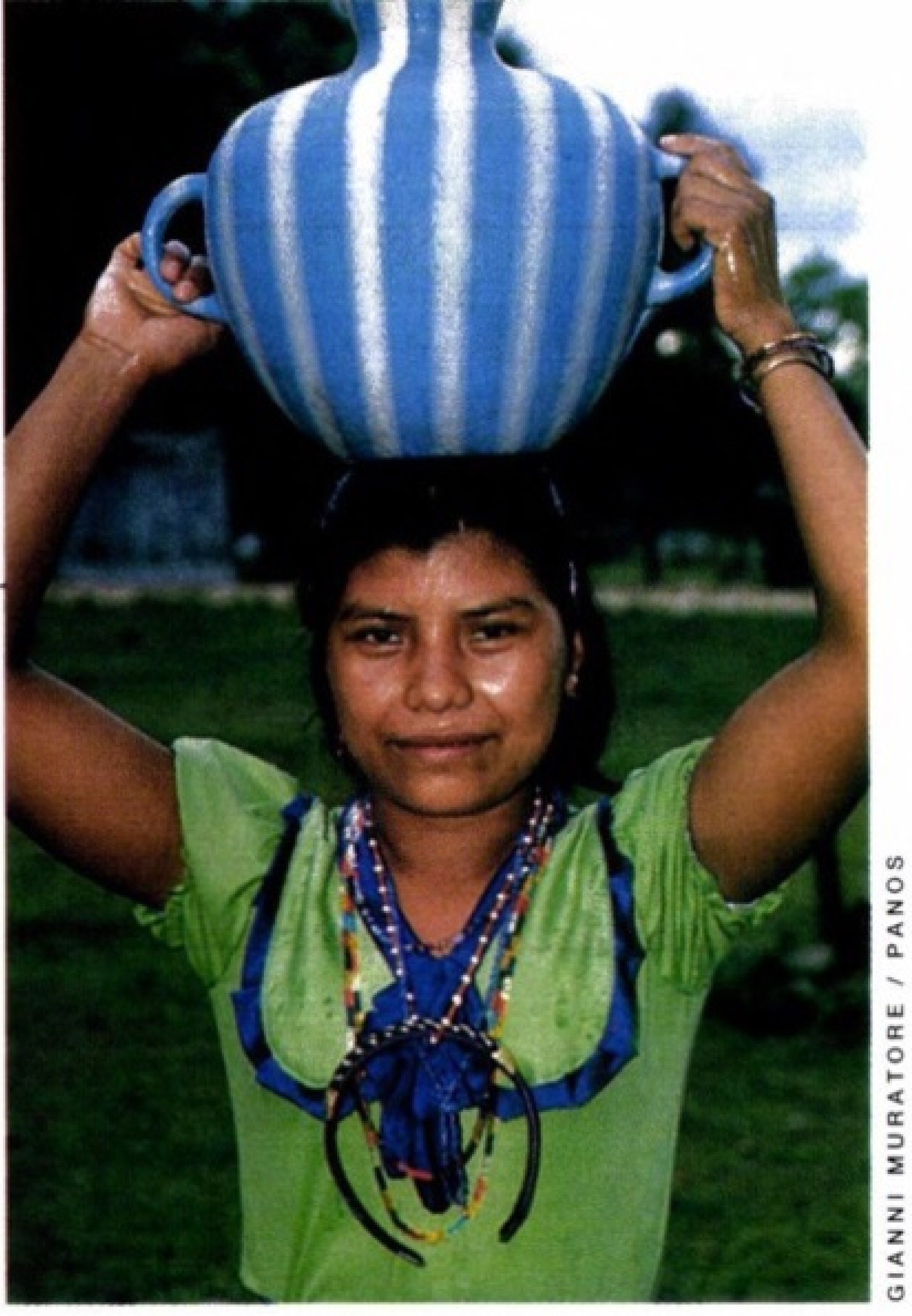
MARK CARWARDINE / STILL PICTURES

MEXICO

Raucous resistance

Women in Chiapas speak their minds



Heavy load: women in Chiapas are standing up to the military.

GIANNI MURATORE / PANOS

BAREFOOT, with a baby slung on her back, Calendaria Morales Perez runs up a dusty road and brandishes a stick. 'Murderers, assassins, sons of the devil,' she cries in Spanish. 'Out of our village!' Her aunt, Aydelina Morales Guillen, lopes ahead echoing the cry: 'Out devils!'

Nine trucks, carrying almost 200 armed Mexican federal soldiers, leave Morelia in Chiapas with 50 women and children waving sticks and throwing rocks at them.

This is the second time in a week soldiers have tried to enter Morelia and the women have turned them back. On the 22nd December last year a paramilitary group killed 45 people including 4 pregnant women and 18 children. President Ernesto Zedillo ordered soldiers to 're-establish law and order' in the region. Villages believed to be supportive to the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ZNLA), a group of rebels fighting for the right to land and autonomy of indigenous people, were targeted.

The tension between the Government and the ZNLA continues despite peace agreements signed in 1996. Zedillo maintains that troops are still necessary to disarm the Zapatistas and bring aid to families affected by the violence. Zedillo's view is echoed by the commanding officer of the troops attempting to enter Morelia: 'We're here to see that everyone is all right.'

'We're not pets they need to take care of,' says Morales Guillen. 'We're not animals they have to control with weapons… They say they bring aid, but all they bring are guns.'

Morelia is largely supportive of ZLNA but there are divisions within the community. Morales Perez says two of her uncles are soldiers in the federal military and two of her brothers are insurgents in ZLNA.

The community wants to avoid violence, so the governing committee of Morelia decided to send the main targets – the men – into hiding in the nearby mountains. Women take turns to watch for soldiers near the entrance to the town.

Since the men are scarce, many fields lie idle and local income has dropped. 'The men can run,' says Blanca Flor from a group working with indigenous women in Chiapas. 'But the women with three children can't run so fast, so they stay and wait for what comes. Even after all that's happened, there is so much courage. Every day the women get madder. And the madder they get, the stronger they get.'

Robin Flinchum/*Third World Network Features*

SAVRAN / STILL PICTURES

Nuclear fever

Russia is planning to build its first new nuclear power stations since the Chernobyl accident in 1986. The state-owned nuclear power company, Rosenergoatom, is to start building four nuclear reactors before 2010. Three other reactors which had been started on before 1986 will be completed by the end of 1999. The Government wants to increase the proportion of the country's electricity generated by nuclear power from the present 13 per cent to over 20 per cent by 2030.

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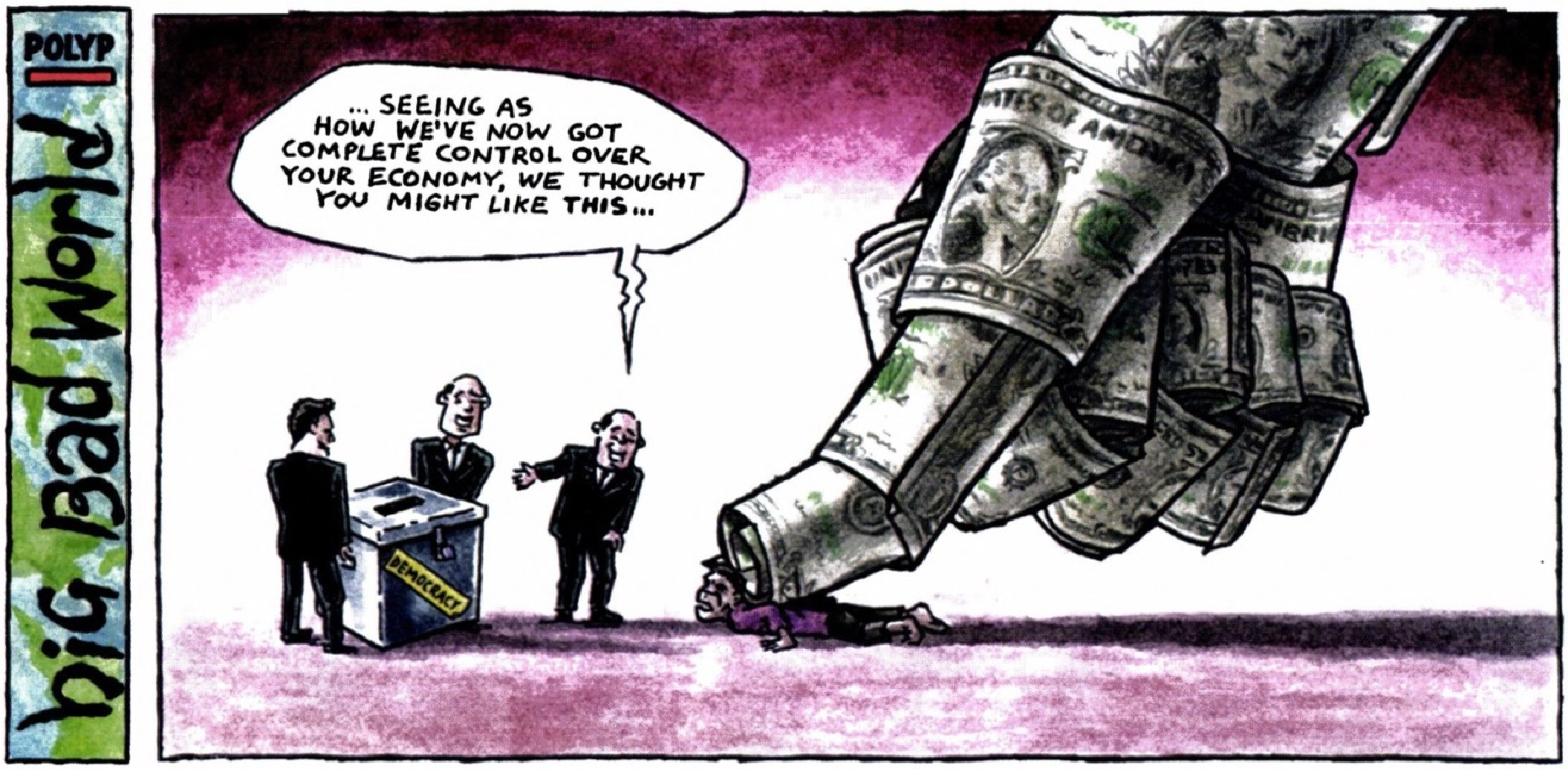
POLYP
big Bad World
… SEEING AS HOW WE'VE NOW GOT COMPLETE CONTROL OVER YOUR ECONOMY, WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE THIS…
DEMOCRACY

Update

TRANSPORT

Wrong Way

Road-safety experts give dangerous directions

ANDY CRUMP / STILL PICTURES

THE WEST'S ideas about road safety are hazardous for the Third World, says Dinesh Mohan from the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. He explains that most Indian roads are built for cars and have a lane system based on the width of a car. This makes sense in countries like Britain where 85 per cent of vehicles are cars, but in India two-thirds are motorbikes, followed by buses, trucks and rickshaws. And that is not counting bicycles which outnumber all other vehicles – one in a hundred Indian families have a car, one in ten a motorbike and one in two a bicycle.

Indian roads are designed for cars that need uninterrupted traffic flow, says Mohan, rather than cyclists and pedestrians who need shady trees, kiosks, bicycle repairs and other services at shorter distances.

But knowledge like Mohan's is regularly overlooked. An example is the Red Cross's latest World Disasters Report which predicts that road accidents will become one of the most common causes of death in the next 20 years. The report also bemoans Majority World roads 'cluttered with pedestrians, bicyclists and animals' and demands the removal of 'roadside objects' that might interfere with the flow of cars.

Cars are not the only problem, remarks Mohan. The big killers are buses and trucks which are involved in two-thirds of fatal accidents. And he says another myth is that drivers in the Majority World are more careless and cause more accidents than those in rich countries. Figures suggest that Majority World countries are ten to a hundred times more dangerous than those in the West. But the standard index of accident risk is the number of deaths per thousand vehicles. The greater proportion of people using roads in the South explains why the figures are higher, Mohan explains. In Delhi car occupants are little more at risk than they are in the US, and it is safer to be a motorcyclist in Delhi than in a city in the US, he points out. For a city teeming with pedestrians, the annual number of Delhi pedestrians killed per million inhabitants is four times less than the US ratio.

'Westerners think that life is cheap here. Nonsense! Road safety is a big issue,' says Mohan. In Delhi last month the authorities suspended the licence of a major bus operator because of public anger about speeding vehicles.

Mohan emphasizes that progress towards saving lives begins by Westerners recognizing reality in the Majority World. 'We don't need education about the accident problem,' says Mohan. 'We need solutions.'

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Counting the cost

Years of racism and abuse are taking their toll on young native Canadians, says Hugh Baker, head of the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia. Young native Canadians have higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment and criminal activity than other Canadians. Residential schools, which took aboriginal children to be 'assimilated' through Government care, are being called to account for problems many native youth face. More than 1,000 lawsuits have been filed against the Government by native Canadians alleging residential school abuse. Braker says: 'You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that if you yank aboriginal children from their homes... the social consequences are going to be profound and disturbing. We're seeing the fruits of that today and still the federal and provincial governments refuse to address these problems.'

Dene Moore/*Gemini News Service*

White wanted

NANCY DURRELL McKENNA

Women who use skin-bleaching creams are the subject of both admiration and scorn in Sierra Leone. A joke on radio inspired several attacks on 'bleached women' says Sally King who has used the creams for seven years. 'It is our right to use whatever cream or liquid we want, as it is our skin,' she insists. Sales continue to rise – the Sierra Leone Pharmacuetical Board says more than 26 varieties of skin-lightening cream were imported in 1996 and more than 150 brands may have been smuggled in during nine months of junta rule in 1997. Most creams are made in Nigeria but they also come from South Africa, the Caribbean and Pakistan. Some customers see the creams as an investment, explains a man in Freetown: 'The fairer women become, the better chance of hooking a wealthier, influential man.'

Rod Mac Johnson/*Third World Network Feature*

Quote

'I tried to be as funny as I could because it looks too ridiculous to arrest a comedian.'

Wiman Witoelar, Indonesian talk-show host known for criticism of former-President Suharto.

Inside the Disney dream machine

How does Disney do it? **Wayne Ellwood** visits the newest addition to Florida's Walt Disney World and finds a microcosm of the company's global reach.

The magic starts before you know it. You've barely stepped off the plane in Orlando's dazzling high-tech airport before you've been whisked into a Disney-like blender. A smoothly-efficient monorail glides to the terminal building while a silken recorded voice welcomes you to the home of Walt Disney World (WDW). Below, the shimmering pools, waving palm trees and manicured green grass of the landscaped grounds reinforce the message that you've made it to fantasyland, a bounded and cloistered universe isolated from the cares and concerns of real life.

Walt Disney World in Florida is the jewel in the crown of the Walt Disney Company, a $23-billion media conglomerate that may just be the single most powerful and influential force in the globalization of Western culture. In the wired world of the new millennium the real power to promote and consolidate consumer capitalism will lie not with the International

WAYNE ELLWOOD

Monetary Fund, Texaco or Monsanto but with the control over the 'infotainment industry' – film, TV, music, ideas and information. What one writer has called 'the sinews of our post-modern soul'.[1]

You may identify the Disney name with a trademarked signature or for its phenomenally popular animated films *Aladdin* or *The Lion King*. But the shoe-string company that a visionary young American artist named Walt Disney founded back in 1923 is today a worldwide entertainment giant.

In addition to the Orlando operation (which contains four separate theme parks), there are Disneylands in Anaheim, California, near Tokyo in Japan and north of Paris, France. The company also has its fingers in book, magazine and newspaper publishing, mainstream feature-film production and distribution, cable TV, music recording, live stage shows, real estate development, major league baseball and ice hockey, video production and sales, retail stores, product licensing, computer software and on-line services. And there's more. With its $19-billion take-over of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) network in 1995, Disney edged within a hair's breadth of Time-Warner in a bid to become the world's number one media group.

At the same time, the term 'disneyfication' has entered the language, used to describe the process of turning the flesh-and-blood world we all inhabit into a replica of Disneyland – sanitized, safe, entertaining and predictable. Reason enough I thought to visit the world's number one tourist attraction.

The Orlando airport last year welcomed 27.3 million passengers, making it one of the busiest in the world. Estimates are that nearly half those visitors came to visit the Disney World complex of theme parks, hotels, restaurants, bars and shops. In total Disney World draws more than 30 million tourists a year, many of them from overseas. Brits top the list of foreign visitors: nearly 1.2 million flew to Orlando last year, enough to fill ten jumbo jets every day.

Forty years ago this part of central Florida was untouched by mass tourism. It was a land of orange groves, lush wetlands, palmetto scrub and vegetable farms. There were just over 20,000 people then in Orlando, a quiet, relaxed place where 'good-ole-boys' ran the citrus-based economy and the town too.

Then, in the early 1960s something strange and suspicious began to happen. Word spread that a mystery buyer was snatching up scattered parcels of bush and orange grove south and west of the city, 20 acres here, 100 acres there. By the time the buyer's identity leaked out the Disney company owned more than 24,000 acres. Eventually the company's real estate holdings would exceed 30,000 acres of central Florida.

The Rainforest Cafe

WAYNE ELLWOOD

The Rainforest Café (above): shopping and eating with an ecological theme. Cooling off in Harambe village (right) with one of Disney's hand-crafted baobabs behind.

It's difficult to appreciate the size of Disney World even after you've been there. The numbers give you some idea: 43 square miles, twice the size of Manhattan. The company proudly pumps out all kinds of statistics to give visitors and the press the proper sense of awe. What they don't talk about is the sweetheart deal they managed to swing with local and state authorities when they were first floating the scheme back in 1965.

Dazed by the promise of millions of tourists and eager to please the Disney team, the state gave the company all the rights and powers of an independent municipal government. Part of the rationale was that Disney was promising to build two communities of the future, each with as many as 20,000 residents. This was where Walt was planning to erect his Environmental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT), a technocratic vision of urban bliss smack in the middle of Florida swamp and pasture. The idea of a theme park was a minor part of the planned development.

Uncle Walt ... his life and times

Early years

The Walt Disney Company's eponymous founder was born in Chicago in December, 1901 and died in Los Angeles in December, 1966 almost exactly 32 years ago. As a young boy his family moved to Marceline, Missouri and bought a 45-acre farm. Though he spent only three-and-a-half years there the idyllic pastoral setting and the turn-of-the-century streetscape of the midwest American town were forever etched in his mind, triggering a nostalgic yearning for romance and simple values which shaped his personality and coloured his creative vision for the rest of his life. 'Main Street USA', the entry to Disney's Magic Kingdom in Florida, is said to be a carefully-crafted homage to his Marceline childhood.

WALT DISNEY COMPANY

Family

Walt's father Elias was a jack-of-all-trades whose wanderlust took him from Chicago to Missouri to Kansas City with his family in tow. He was frugal, authoritarian and moralistic, all traits which had an impact on his son. Walt's strongest emotional ties were to his mother though he was also close to his brother Roy who later became his life-long partner and the business brains behind the company.

Film Pioneer

Disney began to draw and sketch in high school and studied cartooning on the side. After a ten-month military stint in France towards the end of World War One he returned to Kansas City where he met a young artist named Ub Iwerks. In 1922 the two started making short animated cartoons together.

A year later Walt moved to Los Angeles and re-established the studio along with Iwerks and his brother Roy. They vaulted to fame in 1928 with *Steamboat Willie*, starring a spindly-legged mouse named Mickey. It was the first cartoon with sound. Other short cartoon hits followed including *Three Little Pigs* and the *Silly Symphony* series.

In 1937 Disney made film history by releasing *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first feature-length, colour, animated movie. It was an enormous commercial and critical success. Disney also came up with the world's first theme park and the first use of what he dubbed 'audio-animatronics': lifelike replicas of people and animals with both sound and movement.

Personality

Disney was a notorious workaholic, a perfectionist who ran his company like a personal fiefdom. He was both paternalistic and domineering. And not surprisingly he brooked no dissent, rewarding loyalists with favours and punishing dissidents. He quickly learned that his real talents were not as an artist (he did no drawing after the early 1930s) but as a story editor and an entertainment visionary. He had an intense, single-minded need to succeed and a child's delight in fantasy and imagination. One of his favourite hobbies was toodling around in a miniature train which he had built on the grounds of his Los Angeles home.

Politics and peccadilloes

In later years Disney was a heavy drinker (doughnuts dipped in scotch were reported to be a favourite breakfast). There were no women nor blacks in any positions of power when Walt was running the company. Though his father was a lifelong socialist and Walt flirted with progressive politics in the 1930s, he became a militant anti-communist after a strike by animators in 1941 .

In the 1950s he was appointed as a (secret) FBI special agent charged with passing on information about supposed communist infiltration of the Hollywood film world. By the end of his life he was a right-wing Republican supporting Cold-War hawk Barry Goldwater in his failed 1964 presidential bid.

KILIMANJARO SAFARIS

WAYNE ELLWOOD

Today the Reedy Creek Improvement Area, the legal name of Disney's quasi-government, has the power to build its own roads, operate its own sewage and water-treatment plants, run its own police and fire stations, administer its own planning and zoning and employ its own inspectors.

'It's really a state-within-a-state,' quips Ed Erickson, an investigative journalist with the *Orlando Weekly*. Erickson is a wraith of a man with thinning red hair and a clipped goatee. We're in the Tiramisu Café on Orange Avenue, north of downtown Orlando and a good half-hour drive from WDW.

Erickson is explaining how Disney's municipal status works in its favour. 'Because the company can float bonds and tax itself to pay for them, it can then write down some of its capital expenditures as "local taxes",' he says. 'After that it's a matter of deducting those taxes from corporate income tax, rather than amortizing them. It's legal and it saves them millions every year.'

Erickson pops another clam into his mouth and sucks at his ice tea before he races on. 'Disney gets what it wants in this town,' he snorts. 'The people who run Orlando work hand-in-hand with those who run Disney.'

And they protect themselves. In Florida, state law prohibits lawyers from suing people they've represented in the past. Disney hires every attorney it can. Everyone gets touched by Mickey's plump little fingers, which leaves few lawyers who can pursue legal complaints against the company.

Feeling more in touch with the local reality I jump into my rental car and head over to the I 4, the state highway which snakes up from Tampa, skirting the perimeter of the Disney territory before slicing north through the heart of Orlando.

This main access road to WDW carries 160,000 cars a day and was built to accommodate 70,000. I later discover that the infamous 1967 charter exempts the company from 'transport impact fees'. That means it contributes nothing to the upkeep of the public road system which brings them their guests. Well, almost nothing. In 1985 county politicians finally got fed up with Disney's corporate-welfare stance, threatening to sue. The company eventually ponied up $14 million (not much more than lunch money for these folks) over five years for improvements to roads leading to their property. In return the county agreed not to challenge the constitutionality of the original Reedy Creek agreement.

Massive road signs soon guide me effortlessly into Disney's Animal Kingdom, the newest of the parks, a 500-acre, $800-million project which opened this past April. Animal Kingdom is Disney's first venture into real life, what one promotional pamphlet calls 'the amazing reality of nature'. The main attraction is a recreation of an African savannah with imported wildlife, plants and flowers. There are lions, warthogs, giraffes, kudu, zebra and dozens of other species. Around 1,000 animals in total have been placed into a 110-acre ersatz African habitat. Before you reach the savannah and the Kilimanjaro Safari ride you make your way through the Safari Village, past the Disney Outfitters ('fine apparel, accessories and decorative items') and Island Mercantile ('Animal Kingdom themed merchandise, candy and more') to the Tree of Life, an astonishing 14-storey baobab that could only have sprung from the minds of Disney's 'imagineers' – a word supposedly coined by Walt himself to describe the people he enlisted to design his first theme park in California.

The colossal baobab is made of steel and painted concrete and its trunk and roots have been carved into the features of 325 different animals. A long queue of visitors noiselessly shuffles around and around the 170-foot base of the tree slowly making their way to a cinema inside the trunk. Queues, as I soon discover, are part of the fantasy. Outside each ride or film there is a sign posted with the waiting time. It's rarely less than half an hour and more often longer. But people for the most part wait patiently. The 'imagineers' are experts in crowd control; the lines twist and turn so often you can see only a short length of the queue; there's always a new vista, music plays from invisible speakers, video screens preview what's inside, posters dot the walls.

I head for Harambe, Disney's replica East African port village. The concrete walls look like dried mud and the thatch roofs were made with imported African grass and assembled by African craftsmen. The village of course is a shell. Inside there is the usual collection of shops shilling Disney trinkets, snack bars and restaurants like the Mr Kamal's Burger Grill. Several Africans in native dress stand around for photos. A discreet red and yellow sign points out that this is a Kodak Photo Spot, just in case the decision is too much for the dazed tourist.

The 'safari' is on a high-powered, open-sided truck which lurches over a rutted concrete path, engine screaming, splashing through streams and charging up and down the 'African' countryside. The scrubland was first flattened, then doctored with imported flora, rocks and soil to create the landscape. The smaller baobab trees and termite mounds look real though I discover later they too are cast from concrete. The driver stops to point out different animals, most of which studiously ignore us. They've seen the show thousands of times so don't pay much attention to the gawking guests. A full safari vehicle was leaving once a minute when I was there and I can't help but wonder about the cumulative impact on the animals' sanity of the relentless noise and exhaust from the roaring vehicles.

Orlando is jammed with tawdry Disney wannabes, outlet malls and souvenir shops

The company claims to have a 'global committment to wildlife' and I'm keen to ask management about the conservation message of Animal Kingdom and about animal-rights activists' charges that the new park is a 'fraud' and a 'sham'. But the interviews I requested were denied a few days before my trip and when I suggest follow-up phone interviews I'm told executives are busy for the 'next several months'.

As I pad along the Pangani Forest Exploration Trail I run into Abel, a young 'trail guide' from Botswana. He is one of 50 Africans brought over to the Animal Kingdom on one-year contracts to lend authentic flavour. It's his first visit outside Africa. But what he's looking forward to, he confesses, is visiting New York.

There are 3,400 people working at Animal Kingdom and an astounding 50,000 in all at Walt Disney World. It is a telling comment on the changing nature of the US economy that this place now has the largest mumber of employees in the country at a single worksite.

Another Disney worker tells me later that employees are routinely assigned jobs according to age and appearance. 'The company calls it "casting",' he says. 'In practice that means all the "pretty, young people" get the main front-line jobs. Old ladies sell the merchandise, old men work in security. Haitian women work in housekeeping, Puerto Rican young people work in food services and preparation, African-Americans work as cooks or stewards or in food preparation. And all the "less-than-presentable" people get stuck in the third shift from eleven at night to seven in the morning.'

On my way out I wind past the still unfinished Asian Adventures area, turn right and retrace my steps back to the park entrance. The Rainforest Café, another heavily-themed, shopping/eating extravaganza, beckons to my right. Inside, hundreds of kids and parents pack the cavernous space which is draped in lianas and hung with stuffed-toy rainforest creatures. One of the workers tells me the café takes in $65 million a year and that the average spend is $21 a person. I'm beginning to understand what post-modern culture critics mean when they call Disney World the 'fullest representation of commodified space in North America'. The Disney theme parks are as much about buying as they are about entertainment. And it's this seamless web between carefree consumerism and innocent escapism that I find both banal and perverse.

Critics argue that the theme-park model which Disney invented has escaped its tether and now mediates social relations around the world. Shopping malls, chain eateries like McDonald's, the logomania of Nike and Reebok, all these are influenced by the Disney model which offers what some have called 'shoppertainment' as a replacement for citizenship.

Outside the park I follow the Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway a few miles east to the town of Celebration – Disney's attempt to create a 'community' anchored in the benign mythology of 1950s America. The short main street has quaint New England-style shops, a bakery, a bookstore, a few cafés, a post office and a court house. It has a city hall, too, though the 'city' has no government. It's run by a community association with services provided by the county. And the town's thicket of rules are laid down by Disney management. The houses clustered around the town centre are neo-traditional in a range of styles – from townhouses to grander, single-family dwellings with dormers, gables and wide porches. It's a highly-controlled community with a manufactured history. A town 'meant to be consumed' as one observer put it. Personally I find the place downright creepy and I can't wait to leave.[2]

The Disney-designed town of Celebration: 'manufactured history'.

ALAN CAREY / THE IMAGE WORKS

The irony of Celebration is that few Disney employees could actually afford to live there. Even the low-price townhouses ring in at around $125,000. Affordable housing is a key concern in the Orlando area. The city's phenomenal growth in the last 35 years has pushed the population from 20,000 to nearly a million. Many of those have come in pursuit of the Mouse and its scrambling competitors. The area around Orlando is jammed with tawdry Disney wannabes, outlet malls, souvenir shops and more than 90,000 hotel rooms, half of them Disney property. What this has done is create a gigantic low-wage service economy. And that in turn has sparked horrendous urban sprawl as developers move further out in search of cheap land. With no public transport to speak of, cars become a necessity as commuting distances expand. The average wage here is beneath both the state and national average.

That's the 'Disney dilemma' that Orlando faces, a problem that many believe will lead to a 'downward spiral in public services' unless it's arrested. Judith Kovisar is one of them. She's local director of the Fanny Mae Partnership, a billion-dollar mortgage company with a commitment to fund low-income housing projects.

We're chatting in air-conditioned splendour on the 15th floor of a steel-and-glass skyscraper at the corner of Orange and Jackson in downtown Orlando. Through the heat haze you just make out the car-clogged I 4 expressway in the distance.

Kovisar is no radical. But she sees a crisis coming. 'People around here don't want more development and more roads. Yet Disney will need another 10,000 workers to meet their projected expansion and three-quarters of them will be in low-paid positions.'

She looks at me and shrugs: the straight goods. 'The real danger here is the growing disparity between rich and poor. Disney's got the wealth, they just won't distribute it to those who need it. It's a colonial relationship. The investment is here, but most of the wealth ends up back in California. The workers are just an expendable resource, another consumable commodity in their fun-filled world. And people are beginning to understand.'

Amen to that. Maybe they're even mobilizing in Celebration. ■

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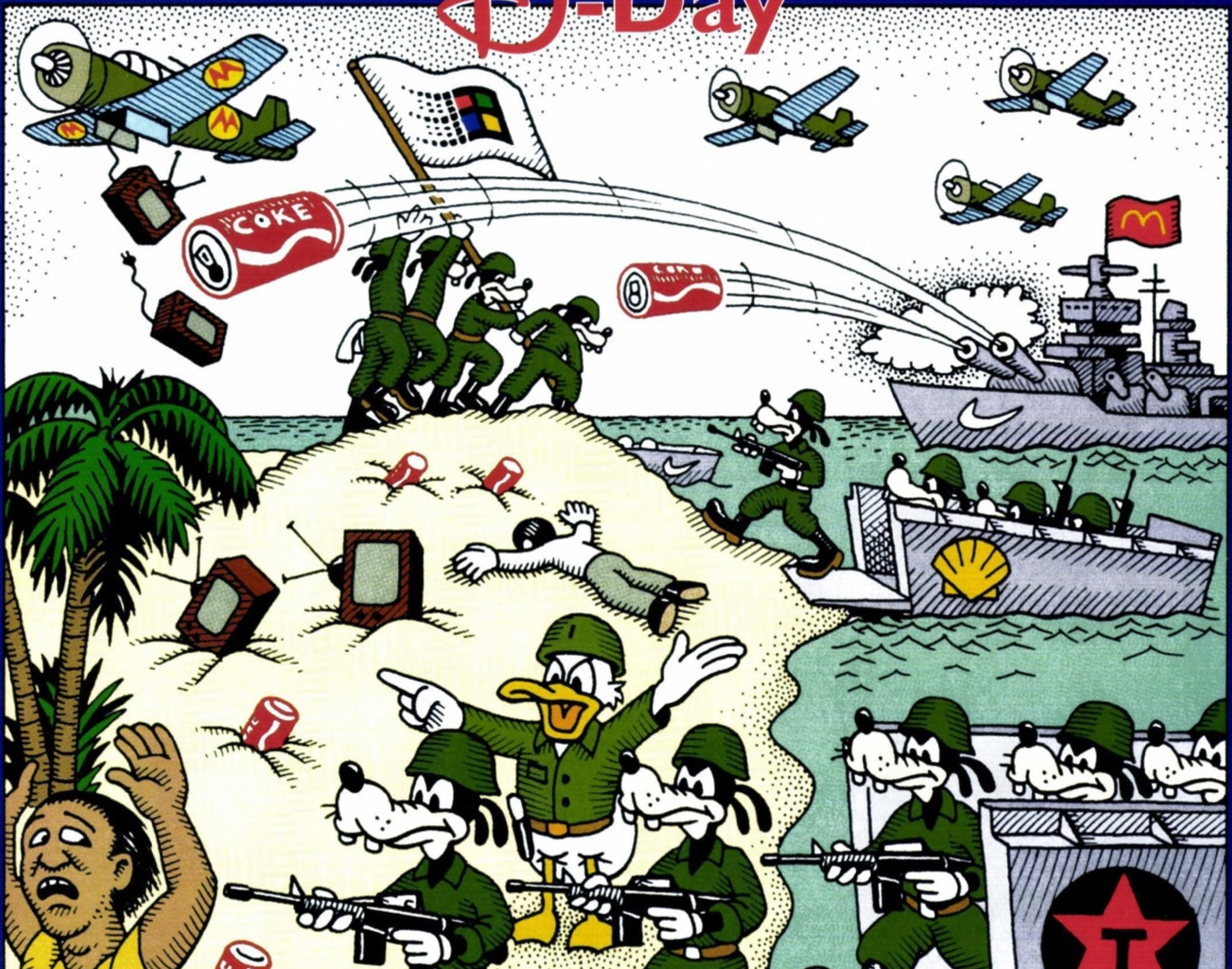
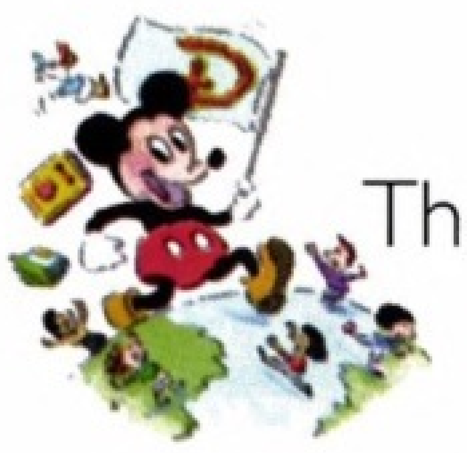
1 Benjamin R Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld* (Ballantine Books, 1996). **2** Russ Rymer, 'Back to the future', *Harper's Magazine*, October 1996.

D-Day

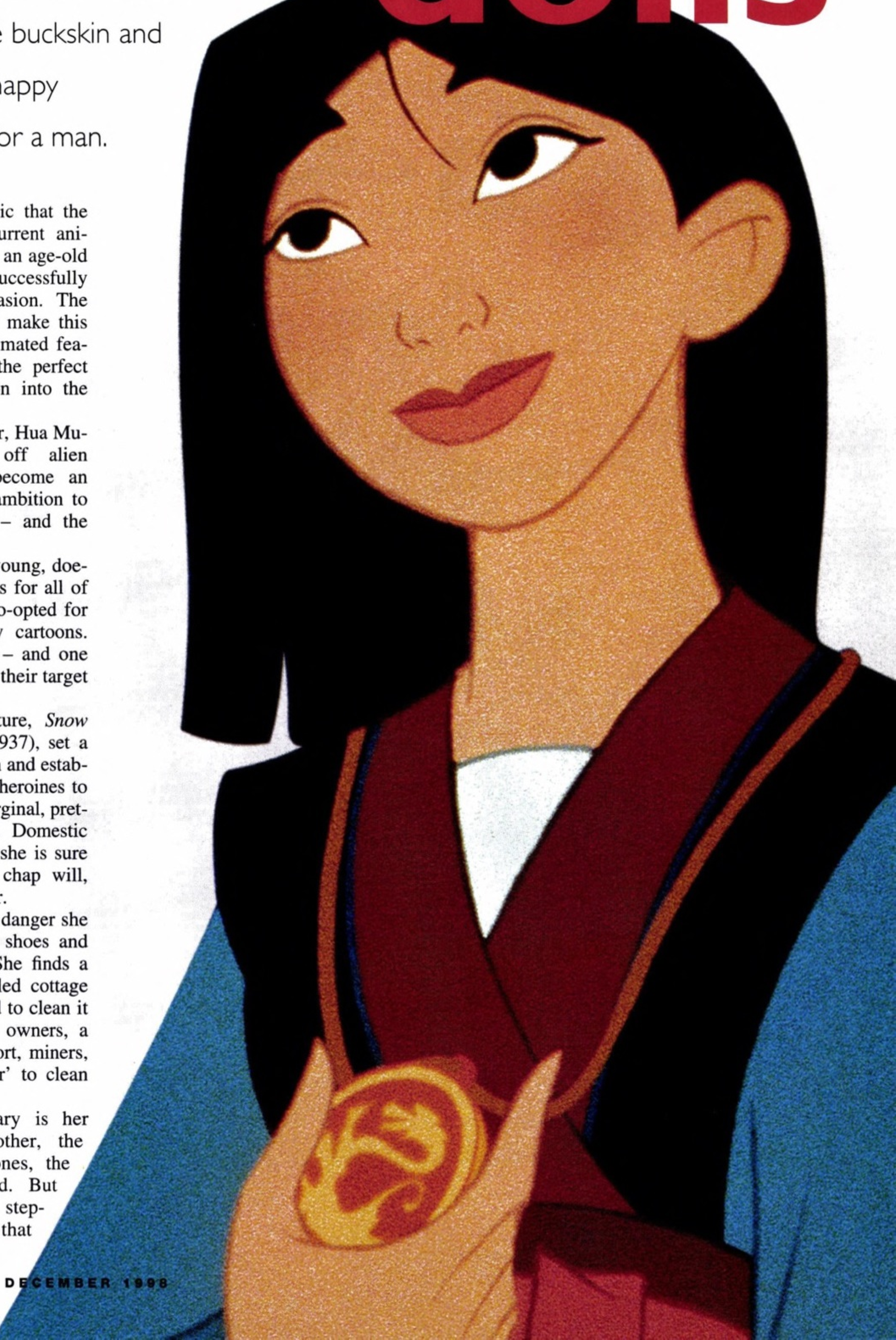


> **“** *It doesn’t matter whether it comes in by cable, telephone lines, computer, or satellite. Everyone’s going to have to deal with Disney.* **”**
>
> Disney Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Michael Eisner



Disney's dolls

The skin colour of the female characters in Disney's recent animated films may be different and the marketing more sophisticated. But **Kathi Maio** argues that underneath all the buckskin and the scales they're still happy homemakers looking for a man.



WALT DISNEY COMPANY

IT is more than a little ironic that the Walt Disney Company's current animated feature, *Mulan*, retells an age-old legend about the Chinese successfully fighting off a foreign invasion. The American media giant chose to make this particular story into its 36th animated feature precisely because it was the perfect vehicle for a strategic incursion into the Chinese film market.

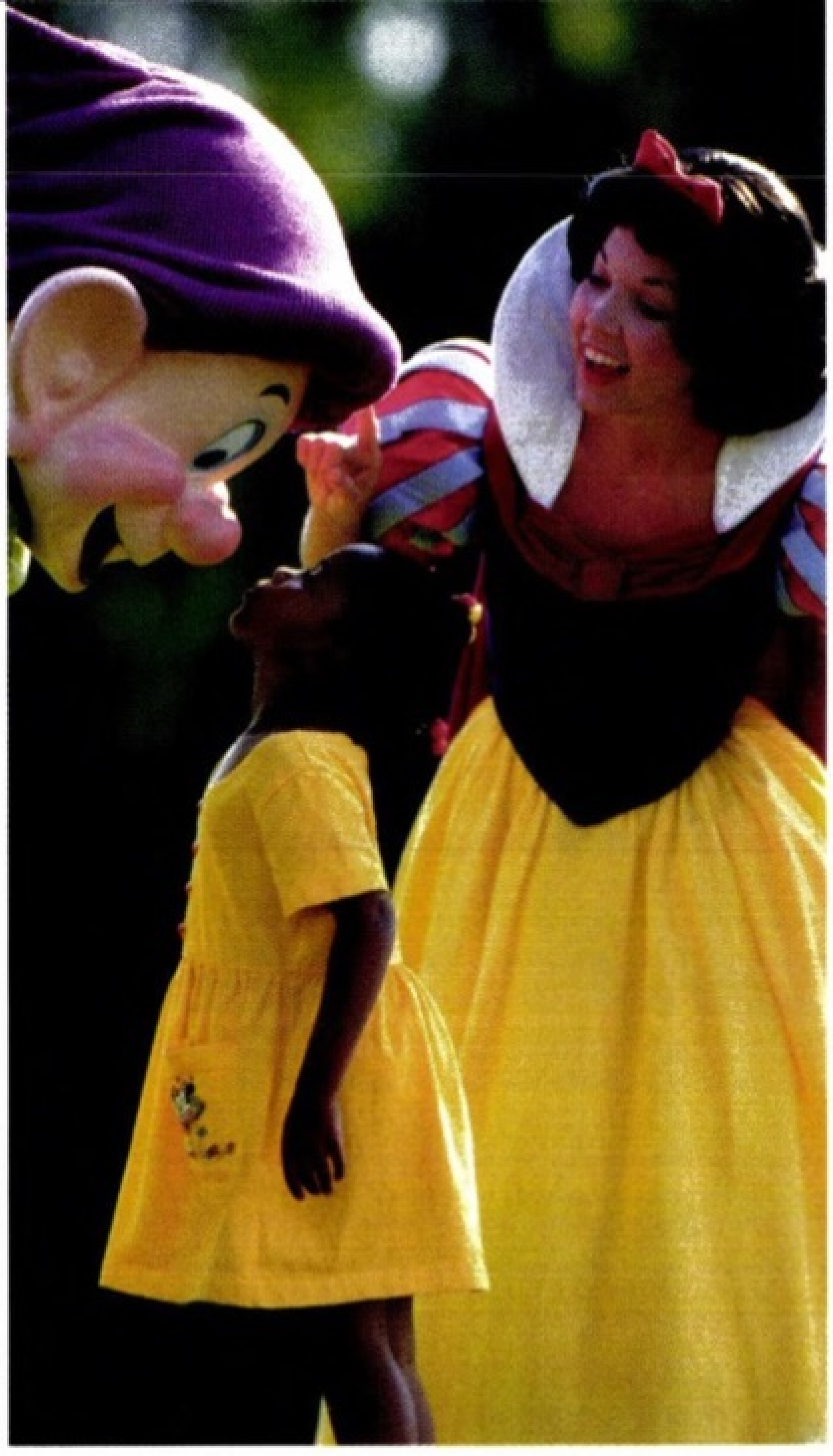
The legendary woman warrior, Hua Mu-Lan, who bravely fought off alien onslaughts has now herself become an agent of a US conglomerate's ambition to dominate the culture of Asia – and the entire globe.

It's a heavy burden for one young, doe-eyed heroine to bear. But so it is for all of the young women Disney has co-opted for the screen. They aren't simply cartoons. They are symbols of the times – and one company's measurement of how their target audiences want to see women.

Disney's first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), set a standard for full-length animation and established a pattern for later Disney heroines to follow. Snow White is young, virginal, pretty, sweet-natured and obedient. Domestic drudgery doesn't faze her since she is sure that a handsome owning-class chap will, someday soon, come and save her.

Meanwhile, when faced with danger she runs away on tiny high-heeled shoes and then falls in a weeping heap. She finds a shelter in a dusty and dishevelled cottage and immediately feels compelled to clean it from top to bottom (since the owners, a group of full-grown, if quite short, miners, obviously don't have a 'Mother' to clean for them).

Snow White's one adversary is her wicked and powerful stepmother, the Queen. Like most Disney crones, the Queen is eventually destroyed. But not before feeding her lovely step-daughter a poisoned apple that



WALT DISNEY COMPANY

Pucker up Dopey: Snow White and one of her 'short friends' meet a happy fan.

places her in a death-like coma. Snow White is lovingly waked by her housemates who place her on a bier. But she is awakened only when Prince Charming comes and plants one on her rosy lips. Back among the living Snow White rides away with her new boyfriend, with nary a second thought for her short friends.

It's prototypical Disney. Young women are natural-born happy homemakers who lie in a state of suspended animation until a man gives them a life. Older women are the enemy, especially if they seek power. And the working class (hardworking, but dirty and uncivilized) are there to serve the rich and privileged, never questioning their subordinate position.

Although the Disney team made use of different fairytales over the years, the basic formula for telling women's stories through animated features changed very little from *Snow White* to *Cinderella* (1950) to *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).

Then came the sixties: Uncle Walt died in 1966. And Disney's animation teams fell into years of disarray and second-rate work. Some felt the Disney studio would never again produce a 'classic'. They were wrong. Several years after management of the studio was assumed by Michael Eisner the company made an impressive comeback with *The Little Mermaid* (1989). With its vibrant animation and music *The Little Mermaid* proved that the Disney studio still knew how to make a first-rate cartoon feature. The movie also proved that old attitudes towards women die hard. Looking at the film you'd never know that the women's movement ever happened.

Disney's take on Hans Christian Andersen is the 'same old, same old'. Except, for the first time, there is a new nymphet quality to the virginal heroine. Above her green tail Disney's Ariel wears only a string bikini top made from a couple of sea shells. And as innocent, wide-eyed and flipper-tailed as she is, there is something distinctly sexy about her too. Her image may not be informed by feminism, but it has most certainly been informed by the eroticizing of the pubescent female, so common in Western advertising and popular culture.

Like Disney heroines before her, Ariel is looking for a romantic solution to the yearning in her heart. (Andersen's mermaid looks for human love only as a means of achieving her true desire: an immortal soul. Disney's mermaid sees a cute fella as her be-all and end-all.) Ariel will do anything to have the bland handsome Prince fall in love with her. She'll disobey her stern but loving father, King Triton. She'll even make a bargain with the devil – played by a corpulent, white-haired seawitch named Ursula. Again, the older, powerful woman (representing evil) must be annihilated. The young Prince, who embodies a healthier form of (inherited patriarchal) power, finishes the witch off. But not before she makes big trouble for our lovelorn heroine.

Ursula gives Ariel a set of shapely legs, but takes her voice in trade. Hence, in *The Little Mermaid*, we are given a female protagonist who is literally silenced by her desperate need for male approval. 'Shut up and be beautiful', the movie seems to tell young girls. (Books like *Reviving Ophelia* have argued that this is a message pre-teen girls constantly get from their society. Why not from their cartoons?)

Since *The Little Mermaid* is a Disney flick, Ariel gets her voice back *and* she gets the guy. But she is nevertheless forced to abandon completely her sea world (her family and friends) for the land-locked kingdom of her Prince. In the end, Ariel is a woman without a social support system, investing her entire life in a romance. Not a situation that I've ever found to have 'happily ever after' written all over it.

And many women agreed. Stung by the criticism, Disney promised to show more sensitivity towards gender issues in their next movie, a re-telling of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). The company hired a woman, Linda Woolverton, as screenwriter. And they put their PR department into overdrive – promoting their new heroine, Belle, as 'modern', 'active' and even 'feminist'.

It worked with most critics. But, as far as I could tell, the most feminist thing about Disney's Belle was that she liked to read. Like the eighteenth-century folktale's Beauty, this Belle remains a self-sacrificing daughter of a silly and cowardly father (switching places with her papa when the Beast takes him prisoner). Still, Disney's idea of an 'independent' woman didn't bother me half as much as their concept of a male romantic hero.

The original fairy-tale (and all the retellings I've ever read or seen, from Cocteau's 1946 movie masterpiece to the cult late-1980's American TV show) portrayed the 'Beast' of the story as a big teddy bear. He looked fierce and strange, but was really kind, tender – and hopelessly devoted. The moral: Don't judge a book by its cover. An ugly exterior can hide a loving heart.

But Disney admitted that they went out of their way to create a hero with a 'very serious problem'. Their Beast is, well, beastly. He terrorizes his household staff. And he intimidates his lovely prisoner, as well. Although he isn't violent with Belle, that always seems a distinct possibility. It is her poise and exquisite beauty that tame his savagery.

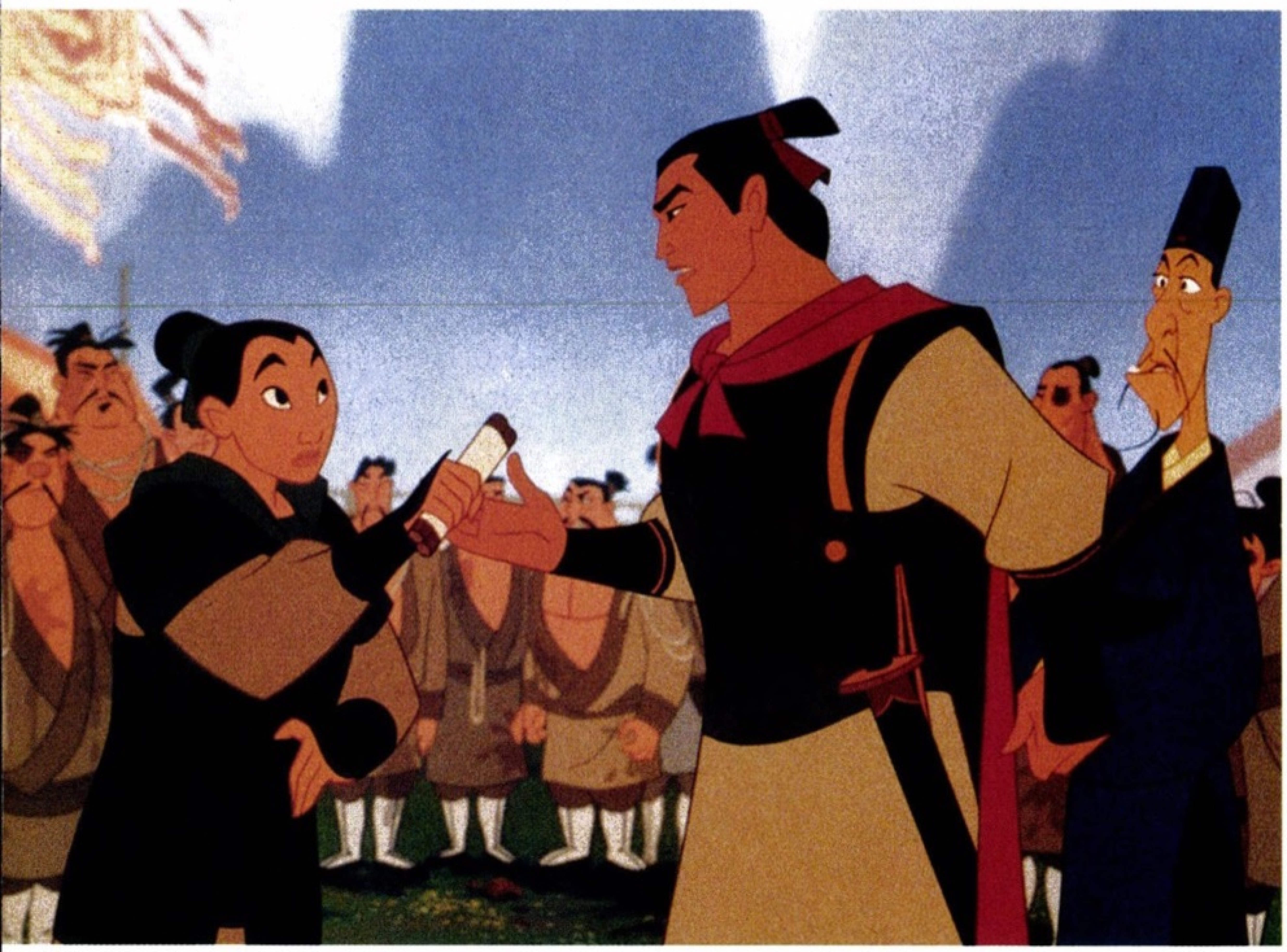
The problem? Disney's reworking of the old fable implies that women are responsible for controlling male anger and violence. If a woman is only pretty and sweet enough, she can transform an abusive man into a prince – forever. If only it were true. But this is a blame-the-victim scenario waiting to happen. In a realistic sequel, Belle would seek refuge at the village's battered women's shelter.

No matter its sexual politics, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* was an international hit, spawning an equally successful stage musical. Disney's cartoon features were back in the groove and they proved it again with 1992's *Aladdin*. It's hardly worth mentioning the portrayal of women in this translation of an 'Arabian Nights' tale. The only significant female character is Princess Jasmine, who is nothing more than a comely pawn bandied back and forth between the hero Aladdin, the evil vizier and the sultan who just happens to be her foolish father.

Young women are happy homemakers who live in suspended animation until a man gives them life

More interesting is the obvious racism and ethnic stereotyping in the story. The dastardly characters (like Jafar, the vizier) are decidedly Arabic looking. While the hero, Aladdin, looks and sounds ('Call me Al') like a fresh-faced American. And then there were the song lyrics, the most insulting of which went like this: 'I come from a land...where they cut off your ears, if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.'

Obviously, Disney never means to offend anyone. That would be bad business.



WALT DISNEY COMPANY

Mulan (left) and Shang, her lantern-jawed commander-in-chief: he expels her from the army and later ends up courting her.

But even animators and songwriters internalize racism. And the 'imagineers' at Disney obviously look to reinforce cultural assumptions and push a few buttons in their audience members, if for no other reason than it's the most efficient way to tell a story. Boyish Tom Cruise look = Good guy. Swarthy, hook-nosed Basil Rathbone look = Villain. Most audience members don't even notice when this happens. It is simply the undertow of the 'Disney Magic'.

Some of that same undertow can be felt in the most successful animated feature of all time, a Hamlet fable in fur called *The Lion King*. Here, despite the African locale, the young hero is voiced by All-American white actors (Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Matthew Broderick), while disloyal, vicious hyena baddies are given street-jive dialogue and voiced by actors like Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin.

Women don't fare well in this story either. Although Simba's childhood playmate, Nala, can kick his butt in a mock fight, when Simba runs away Nala and the other lionesses are powerless to resist the oppressive rule of Scar (a crypto-homosexual villain, another Disney favorite).

With the tremendous success (over $766 million in worldwide box office) of *The Lion King*, Disney plunged wholeheartedly into its own 'Wonderful World of Multiculturalism'. The next animated feature, *Pocahontas*, blended their traditional all-for-love Princess tale with a true story from Native American history. And there lies the outrage: Pocahontas is not a fictional character to be casually re-interpreted. She was a real woman, who deserved better than the cartoon portrait Disney painted of her.

There's no room in this article to list all the inaccuracies in this 1995 film. Suffice it to say that Disney's buckskin Barbie bears little resemblance to the pre-pubescent girl who first met John Smith. Her real name was Matoaka and her 'saving' of Smith from 'execution' was probably nothing more than a tribal adoption ceremony. There was no romance between the two. She called him 'father' when she met him again, years later.

In an attempt to put a cheery spin on what amounts to genocide, Disney ends their film with peace achieved between the natives and colonists. No mention is made of the eventual decimation of the Powhatan nation. And neither in this movie, nor its 1998 straight-to-video hit sequel, *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World*, is any mention made of the fact that Pocahontas was kidnapped, held hostage, forcibly 'civilized' and converted to Christianity, then married off to a colonist who viewed her origins as 'accursed'.

Later, as a publicity gimmick for the Virginia colony, she was taken to England where she sickened and died. It's hard to make two upbeat cartoon adventures out of such a tragic story. So Disney didn't try. Instead, they drew a barefoot babe and gave her cute, comical animal sidekicks and a penchant for falling in love with hunky anglos. Sadly, millions of people around the world saw *Pocahontas* not only as a colorful cartoon but as a palatable history lesson.

In the newest animated film, *Mulan*, Disney has laid claim to a Chinese hero who, although real, lived so long ago that her story has passed into myth. The basic legend tells of a young woman who – to protect her disabled veteran father – enters the imperial army, fighting bravely for many years. As you'd expect, Disney has declared its good intentions and its sincere respect for this Chinese national hero. In fact the distortion level in Disney's *Mulan* equals that of *Pocahontas*.

In Disney's version the woman warrior is discovered after she is injured in battle and sentenced to die. But her handsome commanding officer, Shang (a Disney invention), cannot kill her. Instead, he expels her from the army. In the legend, Hua Mu-Lan isn't discovered until after the war when her comrades visit and find her in women's attire. In the Disney version, Shang (Mulan's would-be executioner) shows up after the war to court his former buddy – to the delight of her family and her. The real Mulan had no interest in romance.

So, even though Mulan is a brave, strong hero, her motivation for entering the army has nothing to do with her own ambitions and everything to do with serving patriarchy (represented by her father and her emperor). Disney makes it clear that men still command Mulan and they always retain the power of life-and-death over her. But not to worry, all they really want to do is marry her and turn her into a Disney happy homemaker.

By looks alone, kick-boxing Mulan would seem to have little in common with dainty Snow White. But looks are deceiving. Disney has changed only the trappings and in recent cases the skin color of its heroines. At heart, they all still identify with male authority instead of seeking their own empowerment. And in the end a good-looking boyfriend remains the truest measure of feminine happiness and success.

As I write this, the Chinese Government has still not given its permission for a mainland theatrical release for *Mulan* (although the film is already a hit in Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Asian markets). Chinese officials are engaged, as the *Sunday Telegraph* put it, in a 'wider struggle to suppress foreign-backed interpretations of the country's literary heritage'.

More power to their struggle. But there may just be no stopping the cultural *tsunami* called the Walt Disney Company. ■

Kathi Maio lives in Boston. She is the film editor of *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* and is the author of two books of film essays, *Feminist in the Dark* and *Popcorn & Sexual Politics*.

Working for the rat

Murray MacAdam

reports on a spirited North American campaign to improve working conditions for Disney textile workers in Haiti.

'HEIGH-HO, heigh-ho, it's off to work we go.'

It's difficult to imagine that the men and women sewing Disney-branded clothing in Haiti would be singing along to the familiar tune of Walt Disney's 'Seven Dwarfs'. Take Remi for example. This shy young man works for the Gilanex company, one of four Haitian plants subcontracted by the giant US-based entertainment empire. He spends his days operating a sewing machine making *101 Dalmatian* T-shirts and other garments loved by children worldwide.

He is paid according to a piece rate system which means the more garments he finishes the more he earns. If he meets the quota set by management he can reach the top rate (around 42 cents an hour). But even the best sewers only reach quota two or three times a week.

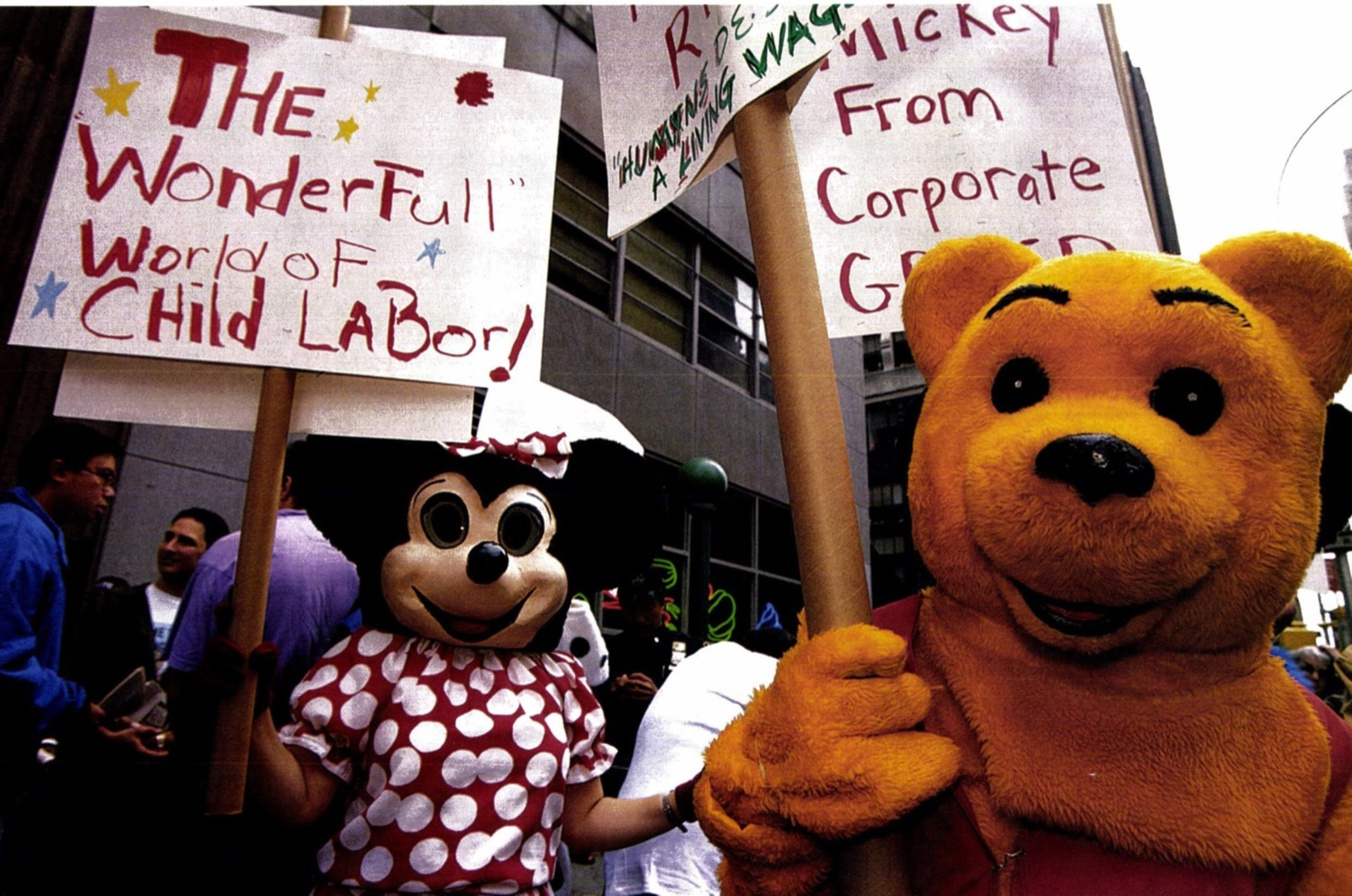
When Remi was interviewed by US journalist Mary Ann Sabo he told her he had been working as a machine operator for five years but still earns just 30 cents an hour. That's the official minimum wage in Haiti and works out to $2.40 a day or $624 a year.

Every day Remi walks 45 minutes to the factory from his home in one of Port-au-Prince's worst slums to save money. Even so, after buying food and water and paying for his daughter's schooling his paycheque is almost gone.

'Yes, I like my job, but it's not enough to get by on,' Remi explains. 'It's not enough to eat or send all my children to school. We're forced to live on the little bit we have. Life is difficult.'

The facts bear him out: much of the food in Haiti is imported and prices can match those in the West. A simple meal of rice and beans with tomato paste and bread costs a family $2.89 — more than the $2.40 that Remi earns on average each day. And that doesn't include weekly rent of $5.13 for his modest one-room house,

Anti-sweatshop activists take their Disney 'Season of Conscience' campaign to the streets in New York City.


THE "WonderFull" World of Child LABor!
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CLARK JONES / IMPACT VISUALS

HAITI 28¢/Hr
TO MAKE A
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FOR DISNEY'S BO$$
RATS
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BAD MOUSE
NO CHEESE
MORE...MUST HAVE MORE
STOP THIS DUCK
FROM EXPLOITING
OVERSEAS LABOR
HEY, Mickey!
Hey, Donald!
Where'd you GET your Wardrobe?
KATHIE LEE
DISNEY?

Disney demonstrators in San Francisco: getting the company to respond to calls for fair wages has been a battle.

RICK GERHARTER / IMPACT VISUALS

clothes or other necessities. No wonder some workers gulp down their lunch in a few minutes so they can race back to their sewing machines to earn more money.

As news of poverty-level wages earned by Disney contract workers has filtered out to northern countries, outrage has grown — along with an energetic fightback campaign. The National Labor Committee (NLC), a New York City-based human-rights advocacy group, is trying to publicize the conditions of Disney's contract factories to persuade the company to pay Haitian workers a living wage of at least 60 cents an hour. The NLC has asked Disney company brass to allow independent monitoring of the factories to make sure conditions are humane. The company is one of the largest corporations in the world and has contracts with an estimated 3,000 factories employing thousands of workers worldwide.

Haitian workers speak of being trapped in debt all their lives just to survive

'Why do we have to accept the system as it is?' asks Charles Kernaghan, one of the key activists behind the NLC campaign. Kernaghan argues that the cruel treatment of Haitian workers makes a mockery of the wholesome family values for which Disney is famous.

The campaign has attracted a wide circle of supporters, including human-rights activists, teachers, students, trade unionists and church congregations. An annual 'Season of Conscience' campaign, aimed at promoting shopping with a conscience, has helped alert Americans to conditions of workers who make clothes and other novelty items for the giant corporation.

The NLC has also produced *Mickey Mouse Goes To Haiti*, a video shot in the Caribbean country which unveils the stark poverty of Disney contract workers. 'They don't treat us like human beings,' says one worker, wearing a mask for fear of company reprisals. 'The quota [of clothes to produce] is too much. When I go home I collapse. I ask God and the international community to speak up for the Haitian people.' Other workers speak of being trapped in debt all their lives just to survive. 'The day I get paid, the children still go to bed hungry,' says one.

These testimonies, combined with footage of the workers' cramped, inadequate housing, have sparked thousands of US schoolchildren to write letters of protest to Disney Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Michael Eisner.

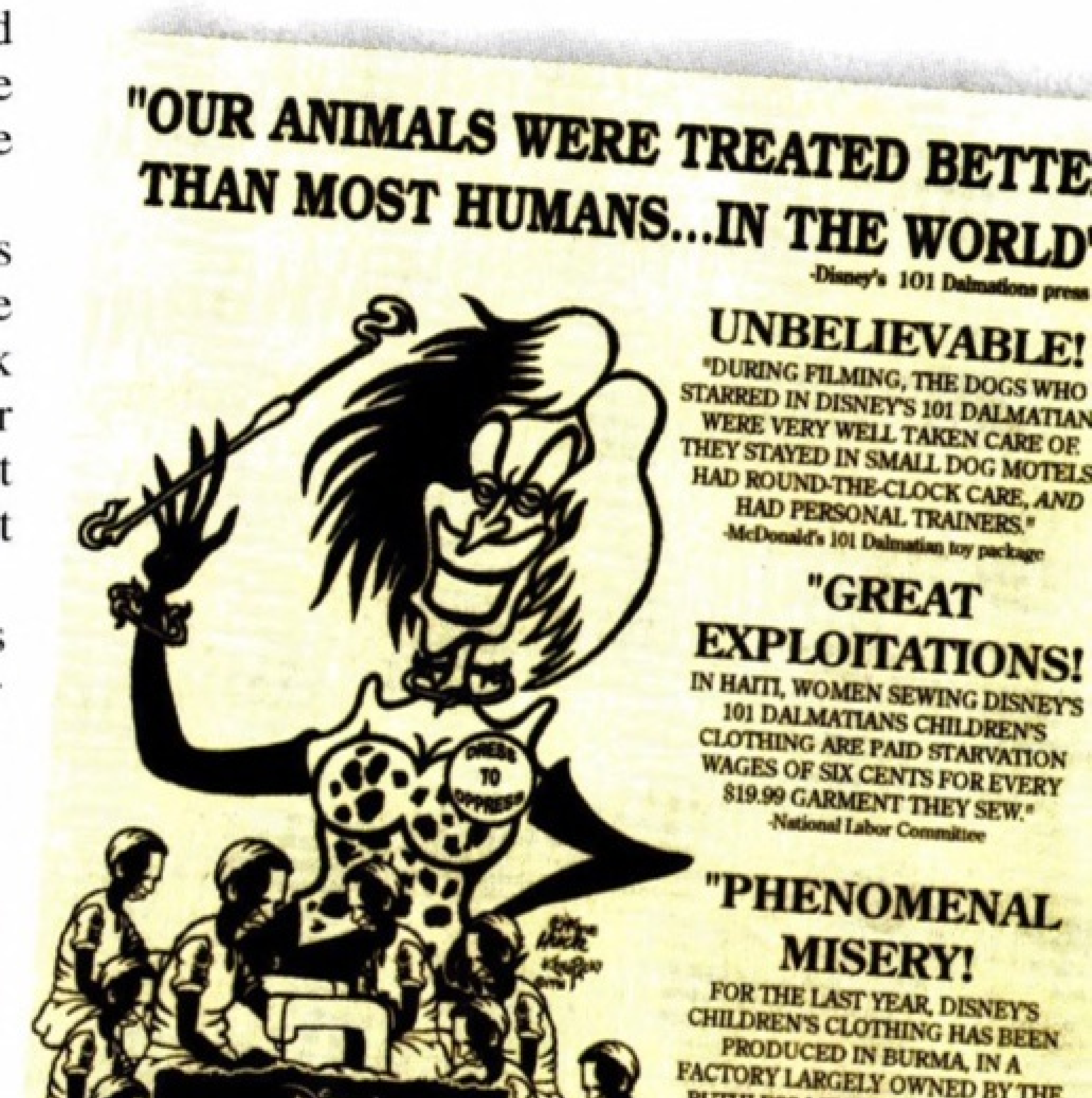
'I grew up with Disney and to see this happening breaks my heart,' wrote one teenager. 'I don't see how you can walk down the street without having to hide your face because of guilt. It's sad that you can't spare 50 more cents to the people that made you a billionaire.'

Socially-responsible investment funds and church shareholders have added their support. They've challenged Disney to allow shareholders to vote on a resolution reviewing Disney's sourcing guidelines and raised the issue of whether monitoring for sweatshop conditions and human-rights violations is adequate at the factories producing Disney goods.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Caribbean and one of the poorest in the Americas. The jobless rate hovers near 70 per cent which means employers have the upper hand in determining wages. Workers bold enough to try forming unions are routinely demoted, fired and blacklisted. (One reason for Haiti's 1991 coup was to prevent former President Aristide from raising wages from the existing 21 cents an hour to 50 cents an hour.)

Solidarity campaigners are careful to affirm the value of Disney's contractor plants in Haiti, recognizing that the 2,000 workers desperately need to keep their jobs. Nonetheless, when workers at the LV Myles Disney contractor-factory in Haiti recently tried to organize a union, 150 were summarily fired. In 1997, the NLC rallied against a threat by another contractor, HH Cutler, to pull out of Haiti in favour of even cheaper wages elsewhere. It was no bluff. The contractor set up a *maquila* factory in Acuna along the US-Mexican border to sew *Hercules*, *Lion King* and *101 Dalmatians* children's clothing. On investigating, the NLC found forced overtime, lack of clean drinking water and limited bathroom breaks.

Getting Disney to respond concretely has also been a battle. At first the company denied employing anyone in Haiti, arguing that it merely 'contracts' work out to other employers and therefore had no responsibility for wages and working conditions. Later, management claimed contractors were paying 60 cents to 90 cents an hour, despite documented proof that found


DRESS TO OPPRESS
Disney's
101
SWEATSHOPS

**"OUR ANIMALS WERE TREATED BETTE
THAN MOST HUMANS...IN THE WORLD'**
-Disney's 101 Dalmations press

UNBELIEVABLE!
"DURING FILMING, THE DOGS WHO STARRED IN DISNEY'S 101 DALMATIAN WERE VERY WELL TAKEN CARE OF. THEY STAYED IN SMALL DOG MOTELS HAD ROUND-THE-CLOCK CARE, *AND* HAD PERSONAL TRAINERS."
-McDonald's 101 Dalmatian toy package

"GREAT EXPLOITATIONS!
IN HAITI, WOMEN SEWING DISNEY'S 101 DALMATIANS CHILDREN'S CLOTHING ARE PAID STARVATION WAGES OF SIX CENTS FOR EVERY $19.99 GARMENT THEY SEW."
-National Labor Committee

"PHENOMENAL MISERY!
FOR THE LAST YEAR, DISNEY'S CHILDREN'S CLOTHING HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN BURMA, IN A FACTORY LARGELY OWNED BY THE RUTHLESS MILITARY DICTATORS. AVERAGE WAGES IN BURMA ARE SIX CENTS AN HOUR. THE AVERAGE WORK WEEK IS 60 HOURS!"
-National Labor Committee

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE, 275 SEVENTH AVE. NY, NY 10001 212/242-3002 workers were earning wages as little as 12 cents an hour.

Eventually, the company reluctantly agreed to send representatives to check conditions and wages at its contractor plants. However, on the key points — wage hikes and *independent* monitoring — the giant media conglomerate refused to budge. NLC visitors to Haiti discovered that workers had never heard of the 'Walt Disney Corporate Code of Conduct' that allegedly guarantees basic rights to workers.

It's clear that the multi-billion dollar firm could easily afford to pay workers in Haiti, China and elsewhere a living wage. Disney CEO Eisner received over $185 million in pay and stock options in 1996. It would take a Haitian worker sewing Disney garments 156 years to earn what Eisner was paid in an hour. The NLC found that for every pair of *Pocahontas* pyjamas sold in the US for $11.97, a Disney worker received just 7 cents. Disney contractors in Haiti have admitted that their profit margins are 12 to 17 per cent, triple the typical rate for US manufacturers.

The plight of Disney's Haitian workers showcases the power of footloose capital in a world hungry for work. As Western multinationals roam the world in search of hefty profits they gravitate towards the very cheapest labour.

'The global economy pits workers in the US and other industrial countries against Haitian workers in a bitter race to the bottom,' notes Kernaghan. 'It's a matter of who will accept the lowest wages and the most miserable working conditions.'

Nonetheless, Kernaghan believes that consumer pressure can move the whole system forward, as it did with US clothing retailer Gap. A vigorous and noisy campaign finally forced Gap to become the first company to open its contractors' plants to independent human-rights monitors.

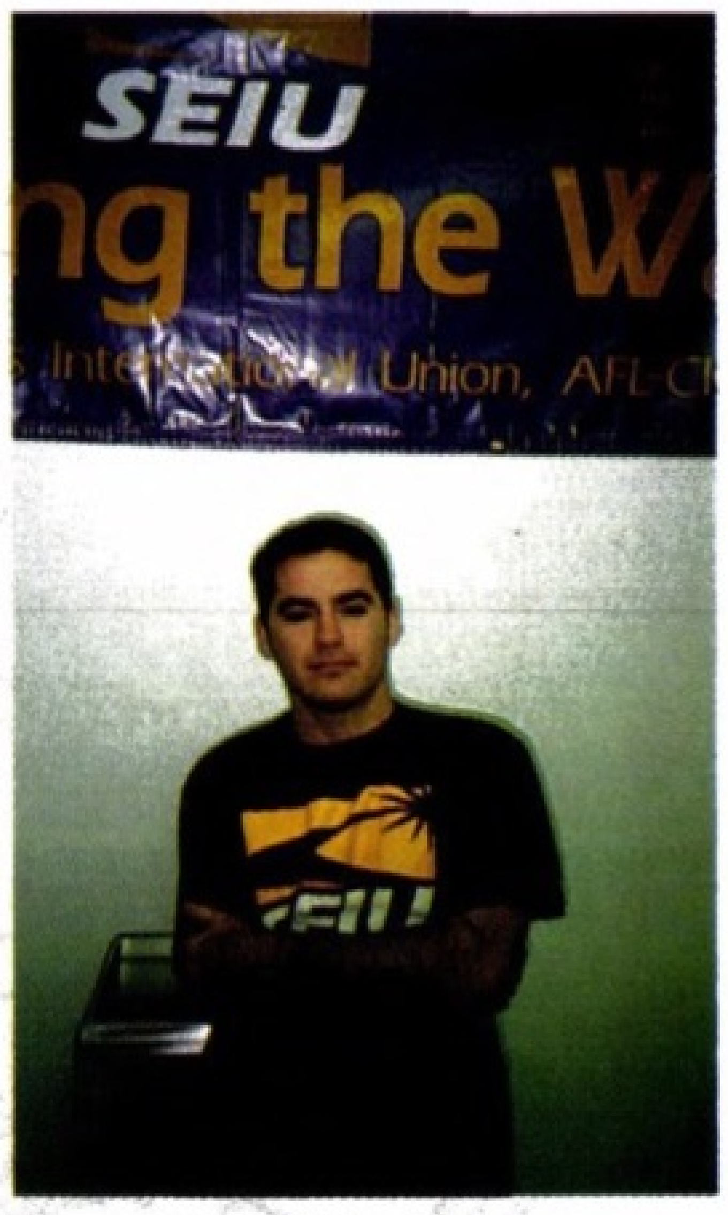
The Disney campaign has been just as noisy but the company has chosen to close its ears. Kernaghan acknowledges that it's an uphill battle but claims a victory of sorts in that huge companies like Nike and Gap are at least being forced to respond to the growing anti-sweatshop campaign.

'We're well on the way to building a social movement with the strength to hold corporations accountable for their human-rights practices,' he says. 'And to pay a living wage.' ■

Murray MacAdam is a community worker and freelance writer based in Toronto.

Service with a smile

Wayne Ellwood talks to a Disney trade-union activist about working in the fun factory.



Mike Cohen: 'daily verbal abuse'.

In Orlando they call it the 'Mouse Factory' – or sometimes just 'the Rat'. But whatever name you want to use, the Walt Disney complex has a powerful impact on employment in this part of central Florida. In fact in many ways Orlando is a classic 'company town'. There isn't a stout mill-owner perched in a hillside mansion and the factory chimneys don't spew out thick black smoke but the company's influence in the city and surrounding Orange County is just as powerful.

'Disney controls this town, there's no doubt about it.' Mike Cohen flicks through the papers on his desk and ignores the insistent ring of the telephone at his elbow. Cohen is a trade unionist and a militant one at that, not a common commodity in this part of the southern US.

Local 362 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has a spartan office in a nondescript strip development off the Orange Blossom Trail, a short drive south of downtown Orlando. (My instructions were: 'Drive three miles past the McDonald's until you get to the Denny's and then turn left at La Quinta Drive.')

The SEIU is affiliated to the American Federation of Labor and represents cleaners, attractions workers, ticket-takers and animal-care workers at Disney's Orlando theme-park complex.

Cohen is a vice-president of the local union branch, on leave from his regular job operating the Big Thunder Mountain amusement ride at Fantasyland in Disney World. Like a lot of the workers at Disney World, he's from out-of-state. In this case, Texas.

'I came here after my dad died,' he recalls. 'It changed me. I had $200 in my pocket and I had to make it on my own. I was a middle-class kid, there was lots I didn't see and lots I didn't know.' Cohen's been a Disney 'cast member' for almost eight years (nobody is a worker or even an employee at the Disney Company). That's a long time in an industry where typically people stick around for a year, maybe two.

'There is a huge turnover rate,' says Cohen. 'We're talking 200 or 300 per cent a year. You can make ten bucks an hour if you're here for ten years, but because so many people leave, two-thirds of the workers at the park make $6.57 an hour or less.' The company's starting wage hasn't changed in five years.

The Disney management boasts of being a progressive employer offering 'competitive' salaries. Cohen doesn't buy it. 'Sure they're competitive compared to the minimum wage which is at the poverty level. And sure we get 30-per-cent off Disney merchandise, stuff that's already priced way beyond what we can afford. People think we're all high-school kids, but the median age in our bargaining unit is 38.'

The SEIU is part of the Service Trade Council Union (STCU), a consortium of six trade unions that is the only group certified to bargain with the Disney company. The STCU represents about 22,000 full-time workers at Disney World and another 5,000 part-timers. 'People around here are suspicious of unions, no doubt about it,' says Cohen. 'That's because a lot of them are corrupt or in bed with the company or just inactive. Very few of them are organizing politically or on job sites.'

Cohen is especially annoyed about the company's 'benchmark' system of work monitoring. Time-motion experts keep constant track of the number of people using each attraction and all the turnstiles are computerized. 'We have to push as many visitors through each ride as we can. That's their main concern,' complains Cohen. 'If we don't, we hear about it from management: "The counts are low, you need to pick up the counts." You hear that constantly. They talk about the "hourly operational ride capacity". But they never say, "Are you being safe enough?" At Big Thunder Mountain I'm supposed to handle 2,000 visitors an hour. It's just like a factory with assembly-line production, only this is a fun factory.'

Workers are also ordered to flash a constant smile. Every employee is instructed in the 'Seven Guidelines to Guest Service' which highlights the need to smile and to be cheerful. 'We get daily verbal abuse from customers but you have to keep on smiling,' explains Cohen. 'We're supposed to make eye contact, greet each and every guest and smile for eight hours. If you don't you get reprimanded.'

The goal of every Disney employee is to pump out happy people. And in Orlando they get a lot of them – almost a million a week. 'There are more tourists than ever,' says Mike Cohen. He leans back in his chair, pauses for a moment, then grins broadly. 'I hear people saying, "Oh, the workers here aren't as happy as they were last time I came." And you know what? That's probably true. But on $5.95 an hour you don't expect anybody to be happy.' ●

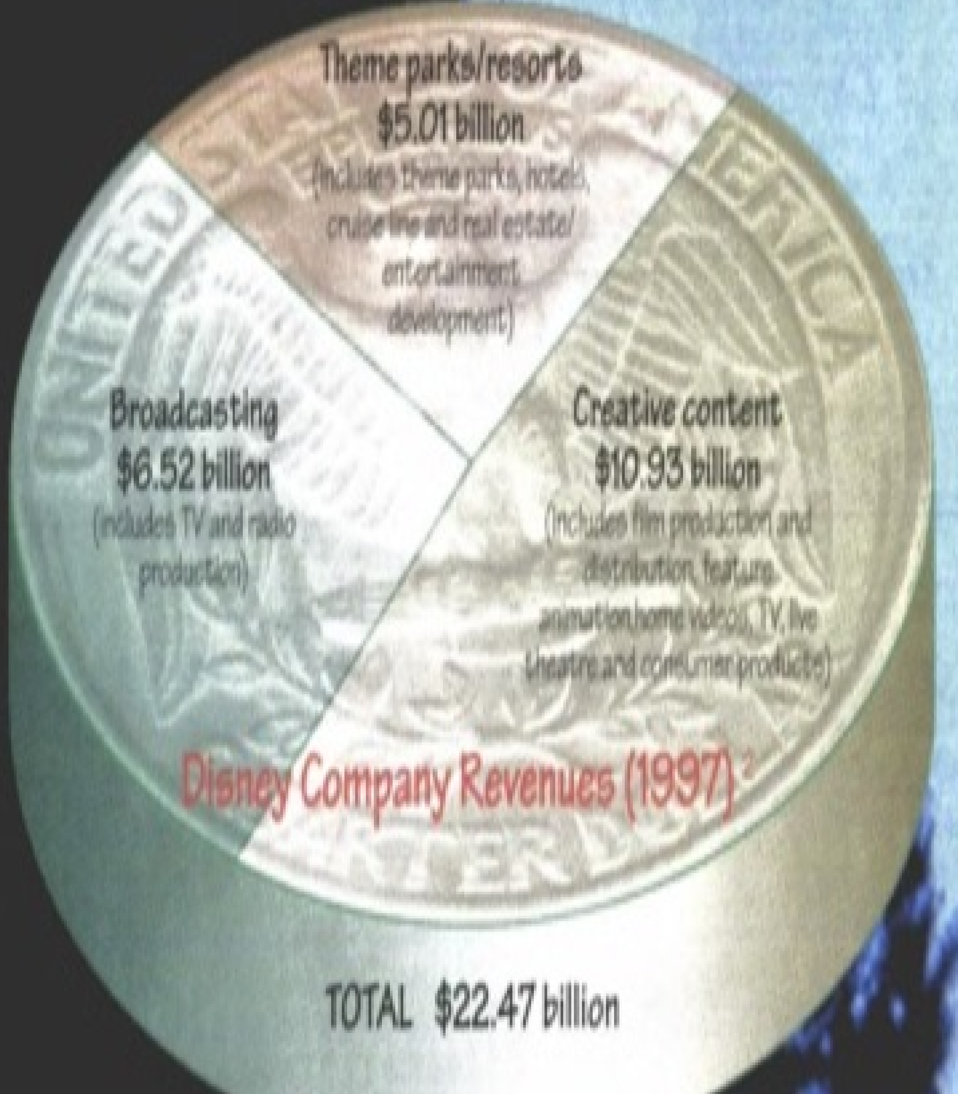
THE FACTS

The House of the Mouse

From its humble beginnings in Kansas City, the Walt Disney Company has become one of the world's biggest media conglomerates, with interests from book publishing and feature films to sports and real estate. Here we take a close look inside the House of the Mouse.

CIRCLE OF LOOT

The Disney Company is in a neck-and-neck race with Time-Warner to be the top player in the global media system.



FRONTIERLAND

Overseas markets will receive more attention as Disney attempts to expand its overseas (non-US) sales. The company hopes to build foreign earnings from 23% of total revenues in 1995 to 50% by the year 2000.

- In 1997 the Disney Channel was launched bringing 24hour-a-day, 7 day-a-week programming to North Africa and the Middle East. In addition the Disney Channel broadcasts in France, Taiwan, the UK, Australia and Malaysia.[2]
- International sales of Disney-branded products now outstrip US sales. Recently a Mickey and Friends store opened in Indonesia and a second outlet will open soon in Poland.[4]
- Disney's sports channel ESPN International broadcasts on a 24-hour basis in 165 countries in 21 languages.[5]
- Disney has a 20-33% ownership in five European commercial TV companies including Tesauro SA (Spain), RTL2 and cable TM3 (Germany) and the Scandinavian Broadcasting System. It also has a 20% share in the Brazilian pay-TV company TVA.[5]

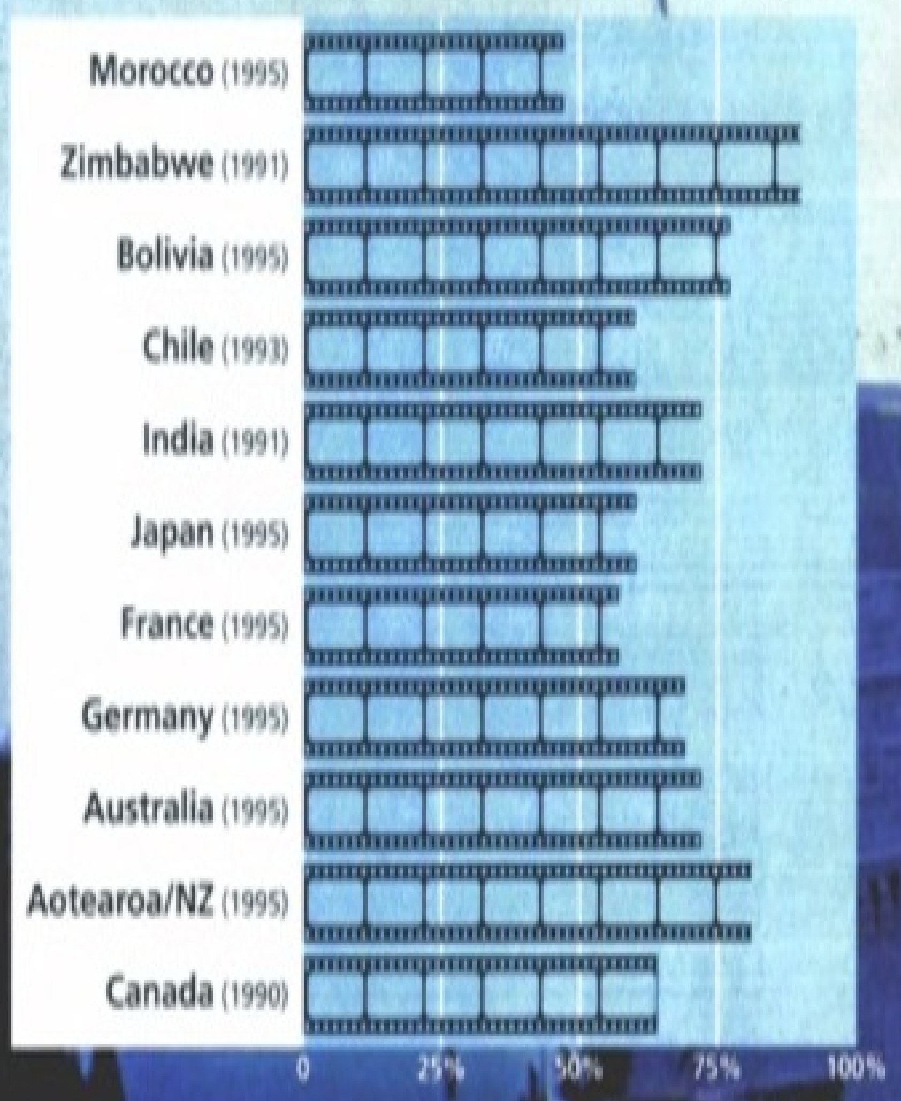
IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL

Disney's corporate holdings and joint ventures with other corporations are immense and complex. Here is a partial list of the company's holdings.[2,3,4,5]

Motion Pictures Walt Disney Pictur • Hollywood Pictures • Miramax Film Corp US • Television ABC TV network • plus holdings in 9 cable TV networks including Channel, the Disney Channel, Walt Disn nal Hockey League) • Anaheim Angels (Major League Baseball) Theme Parks/Resorts Walt Disney World () (Orlando, Florida) • Dis Disneyland Paris • Disney Cruiseline • Disney Vacation Club • Other Merchandise Licensing • The Disney Store • Dis Art Classics • Disney Direct Marketing • Disney Interactive • Disney Online • Fairchild Publications • Cl Disney play sites • DisneyQuest • The ESPN Zone • Mammoth Records • Walt Disney Records • Hollywood Records • Lyric Street Records • Hyperion Books

CULTURE WARS

US films as percentage of total film imports (1997)[6]



The US movie and TV industry is the single most powerful vehicle for the spread of an American-dominated global corporate culture. Disney films, both animated and live-action adult fare, are a key part of it.

> "The most spectacular example of multi-media ownership and the leading example of acquiring control of every step in the mass media process, from creation to content to delivery into the home."

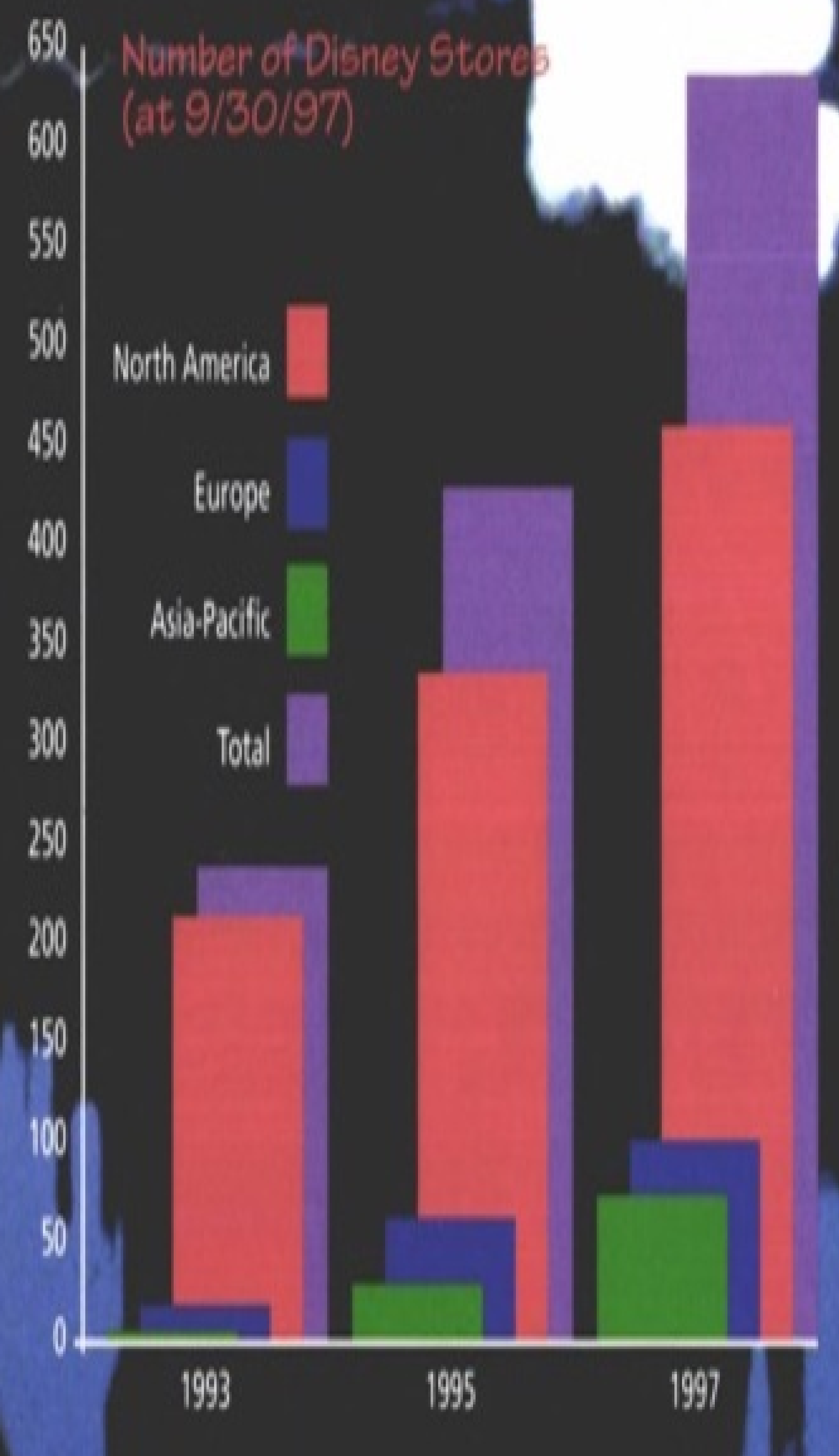
Ben Bagdikian from *The Media Monopoly*[1]

NEWSFOTO UPI

ATTENTION SHOPPERS

Disney was the first company to combine successfully the notion of entertainment with shopping.

- In 1930 Walt's brother Roy signed the first international licensing contract with Borgfeldt and Co for production and sale of Mickey Mouse merchandise.[7]
- The first Mickey Mouse watch was sold by the Ingersoll Watch Company in June 1933.[2]
- By 1954, 700 companies were making more than 3,000 Disney items from pyjamas and underwear to toys, games and school supplies.[8]
- The first official Disney Store opened in Glendale, California in March 1984 and the first store outside the US in London in November 1990.



TOM McKITTERICK / IMPACT VISUALS

WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

◆ THE BOSS

Disney Chairman Michael Eisner's current 10-year contract gives him a yearly salary of $750,000, *plus* bonus up to a maximum of $15 million a year according to financial performance, *plus* shares worth approximately $550-$600 million.[9]

◆ THEME PARK WORKER

at Walt Disney World (Orlando, Florida)
Starting salary: $5.95 an hour
After 3 years: $13,541 a year
at Disneyland (Paris, France)
Average yearly salary: $13,000 -$15,000
Disney's total theme park income (1997): $1.13 billion[10]

STRIKE
GREVE
STREIK
SPECTACLE
DISNEYLAND PARIS
NEWSFOTO UPI

◆ THIRD WORLD WORKER

Contractors producing Disney-branded clothing in Haiti
Average hourly wage: 28 cents
Number of years it would take the average Haitian garment worker to earn what Michael Eisner earns in one hour: 156.[11]

MICKEY MAO(S)

- Disney is anxious to break into the potentially lucrative 1.2 billion Chinese market and is doing all it can to build bridges with Beijing's aging Maoists, including basing its latest animated film, *Mulan*, on a Chinese legend.
- The company launched a Chinese-language radio broadcast from Hong Kong in 1996 which it claims already reaches more than 400 million Chinese.[12]
- Disney's *Toy Story* broke records in Shanghai attracting a million viewers out of a 13 million population and there are reportedly plans afoot to open a Sino Disneyland.[12]
- The Chinese state TV company uses Disney's sports network,ESPN, to provide nearly half the programming on its all-sports channel.[12]

BACKGROUND IMAGE: WALT DISNEY COMPANY

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1 Ben H Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Beacon Press, 1977). **2** *Walt Disney Company 1997 Fact Book* (Walt Disney Company, 1998). **3** *The Media Nation: TV* (Nation Institute Investigative Fund, 1998). **4** *1997 Annual Report* (Walt Disney Company, 1998). **5** Edward S Herman and Robert W McChesney, *The Global Media* (Casell, 1997). **6** *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook* (UNESCO, 1997). **7** Richard de Cordova, 'The Mickey in Macey's Window' from *Disney Discourse*, ed Eric Smoodin, (Routledge, 1994). **8** Douglas Gomery, 'Disney's Business History' from *Disney Discourse*, ibid. **9** *Business Week* (Feb 24 1997). **10** *What the ... : A Newspaper for Central Florida's Tourism Workers*, (SEIU Local 362, May 1998). **11** National Labor Committee, 1997. **12** *The Nation* (Dec 23 1996).

Fantasy cities

It's slick, it's seductive and it's coming to a city near you. **John Hannigan** reports on the creeping 'disneyfication' of our urban environments.

If all goes according to plan, sometime early in the next century a consortium of companies led by Canada's Reichmann family (late of the controversial Canary Wharf project in London's East End) will open the doors to 'Destination Technodome'. The $450 million indoor entertainment and sports complex will be built on the site of a former air force base on the northern edge of Toronto. The facility will include a year-round 150-metre ski hill, a whitewater rafting course, mountain-climbing walls, a Hollywood-inspired theme park and a 30-screen multiplex cinema. That's in addition to a fabricated tropical rainforest and replica of Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

Destination Technodome is one of a new breed of entertainment centres intended to anchor the 'fantasy cities' of the future where tourism, entertainment and retail development are to be bundled together in a 'themed' environment. These urban projects are being marketed as the saviours of declining downtown cores and of stagnant suburban shopping centres. But not everyone agrees. Critics like US writer Paul Goldberger argue that this new urbanism of leisure will further encourage the privatization of public places and the erosion of neighbourhood identities. Goldberger labels developments like Destination Technodome 'urbanoid environments'. Like the pod-bred clones in the science fiction movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* they seem to be genuine, but something isn't quite right. What's missing is a sense of the serendipity, diversity and humanity of traditional street life.

The template for these quasi-cities is the Walt Disney version of the theme park which has forever changed our image of what urban life should be. To appeal to its mainly white, middle-class suburban market Disney crafted a simulated vision of the world which was both idealized and stripped bare of any significant risk, conflict or controversy. Whether in California, Tokyo or Florida, Disneyland visitors need not worry about tripping over garbage, being accosted by panhandlers and 'squeegee kids' or being mugged in the middle of the day. Instead, city life means sampling 'old tyme' fudge or listening to a brass band in the town square. Similarly, exotic foreign locales are rendered accessible and safe: no language or currency problems, stomach and intestinal upsets or political instability. This 'sanitized razzmatazz', as *New York Times* architecture writer Herbert Muschamp calls it, can

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

ESPN
ESPN Zone
BALTIMORE

A fusion of shopping, playing and eating at Disney's new ESPN Zone in Baltimore.

WAYNE ELLWOOD

easily triumph over the real thing. Each year during the March school break, several families from my wife's home town in rural Canada faithfully make a pilgrimage to the Disney resorts in Florida. After returning last winter one of the dads observed (without irony): 'I don't need to go to the South Pacific. I've already seen Tahiti at the Polynesian Village.'

In adapting the Disney blueprint to the contemporary 'theme park city', architects, developers and planners have borrowed and refined two key Disney strategies. To package the new entertainment destinations, they have embraced an architectural style which is designed to create an aura of fantasy, delight and well-being among onlookers.

Whereas storefronts along traditional shopping streets are often diverse and compete with one another visually, the retail establishments in fantasy cities are uniform and harmonious, suggesting consensus and contentment. But reassuring as it may be Disney-inspired architecture is also blatantly commercial – a fusion of consumerism, entertainment and popular culture.

At 'The Showcase Mall' in Las Vegas – a non-gambling entertainment complex on the famous 'Strip' – the 'World of Coca-Cola' is fronted by the world's biggest Coke bottle, 100 feet high. Engineered to capitalize on the worldwide recognition of its brand name, the World of Coca Cola contains a series of interactive exhibits which celebrate Coke bottles, jingles and memories as well as a retail store which sells Coke-themed products. Urban culture here translates into the 'Coca-Cola Salute to Folk Art' which displays the work of artists from 14 nations who have designed oversize Coke-bottle sculptures using an array of styles. Inside, the architectural highlight is the 'Fantastic Fountain', featuring 866 Coke bottles which uncork a laser-like flow during a choreographed sound and light show.

Another significant component of the Disney model is its elaborate but largely invisible surveillance and control system. Thomas Vonier, an architect who has consulted widely with the US State Department on security matters, cites the Disney theme parks as one of the best contemporary examples of what he terms 'large-scale urban control zones'. At Disney World in Florida, visitors' movements are discreetly but firmly directed by a combination of recorded voices, robots in human form and employees. To ensure that guests are directed away from or towards specific locations, Disney uses a combination of technology (monorails and other transportation systems) and physical barriers such as pools, fountains and flower gardens. An action as innocent as taking off your shoes will bring an instant intervention and reprimand. Efficient as it may be, this control system also acts to ensure that guests exclusively follow an itinerary laid out by the park's designers.

Fantasy cities have adopted this same 'Panopticon' model. In designing Boston's Faneuil Hall, the prototypical 'festival marketplace', developer James Rouse sent his project manager straight to Disney World to learn the most effective methods of maintenance and security. At the West Edmonton Mall, the first shopping centre in the world to devote a major portion of its space to entertainment, security guards sit behind a glass wall in Central Dispatch monitoring banks of closed-circuit televisions and computers which reach into every corner of the mall.

In Manhattan, the Disney company has led a drive to sanitize Times Square, formerly one of America's sleaziest porn-pits. Now uniformed, radio-equipped public-safety officers employed by the Times Square Business Improvement District make twice-daily visits to the 45 locations of a computerized watch system to check citizen reports of public misbehaviour. The same no-nonsense approach is spreading to other areas of public life. In Los Angeles transit authorities have introduced 'bum-proof' benches which make sleeping impossible. And, as I found out first hand in a library in Toronto's entertainment district, even a brief attempt at napping can earn a threat of ejection from the building's security staff.

The 'disneyfication' of our cities reflects a larger societal trend toward the 'commodification' and 'passportization' of experience. Today people buy and collect 'leisure experiences' the same way they do consumer goods. And like the purchase of Ralph Lauren sweaters or Gaggia espresso machines, our choices are designed to increase our holdings of 'cultural capital' – resources which can be used to give us an advantage in our dealings with others.

'Been there, done that' has become the slogan of the 1990s and the logo-imprinted souvenirs from a Hard Rock Cafe or a Planet Hollywood restaurant act as 'passports', proclaiming not only that you have been somewhere interesting but that you have consumed a highly-rated experience. What is significant is not so much the role of consumption in helping to assert status and identity but the fact that consumption is increasingly programmed by giant entertainment corporations.

In the Disney theme parks happy endings are guaranteed. But Cinderella may find it tougher sledding in the fantasy cities of the early 21st century. It seems unlikely that the economic benefits from large-scale megaprojects like festival marketplaces, designer sports arenas and high-technology entertainment centres will automatically spill over into the economically depressed neighbourhoods which frequently surround them.

Cleveland, Ohio was once an industrial powerhouse before its decline in the 1960s. Today in the US it is celebrated as the poster child of resurgent urban development. With a restored entertainment district (Playhouse Square), a newly minted professional sports complex (Gateway Center) and the 'Rock and Roll Hall of Fame' designed by superstar architect I M Pei, Cleveland is the American 'comeback city' of the 1990s. Yet these glittering tourist destinations have made little economic difference to the adjacent inner city where 40 per cent of Clevelanders, half of whom are black, remain trapped beneath the poverty line.

People buy and collect leisure experiences the same way they do consumer goods

Tourists and middle-class day-trippers flock to these glass and plastic entertainment complexes where they feel reasonably safe, though few venture beyond to patronize local bars, restaurants and small shops. Atlantic City, New Jersey is a case in point. Since 1978, the year casinos were first introduced to the city, 100 of the city's 250 restaurants have closed and its population has declined by more than a tenth. Property values have declined and there has been little demand for new inner-city housing, manufacturing or warehouse space. Soon a section of the one remaining stable, middle-class black neighbourhood in the city will be levelled to build a tunnel linking the Atlantic City Expressway to a new $1.5 billion casino.

Not only are these fantasy entertainment zones expensive to build – Paramount's 'Star Trek: The Experience' complex at the Las Vegas Hilton rings in at $70 million. They also have a short consumer shelf-life. This means they can be undertaken only by a clutch of deep-pocketed global entertainment companies, like Disney, Universal, Sony, Warner Bros., Paramount and Rank, who own enormous film libraries and goldplated portfolios of recognizable cartoon and movie characters. Consequently, the line-up of attractions at most themed destinations is highly uniform with little local content. In these new leisure spaces citizenship becomes equated with brand-name consumption and the dream of a lively and creative public culture is crowded out by pre-packaged corporate entertainment.

Even holidays like Christmas and Halloween are being co-opted by commercial 'theming'. In a recent news release Madison Square Garden in New York City announced that the clothing company, Tommy Hilfiger, had agreed to sponsor 'Madison Scare Garden', a Halloween attraction which runs for ten days every October. Designed to become a New York institution much like the Christmas Spectacular at the Radio City Music Hall, there are plans to take the show across the country and into Canada.

Nor are the effects of this themed entertainment juggernaut restricted to North America. Until the recent economic meltdown in Asia, American commercial culture was flourishing in Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and other nations in the Asia-Pacific region. Tokyo Disneyland with an annual attendance of over 17 million is the most popular theme park on earth. There's a Nike store in Shanghai, Hard Rock Cafes in Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Taipei. And 'Believe It or Not!' attractions in Korea, Thailand and Hong Kong. Universal Studios has begun construction of a $1.6 billion entertainment park near Osaka, Japan, which will have areas themed to various American places (Hollywood, New York, San Francisco) and motion pictures (*Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*).

Australia too has embraced the entertainment model of urban development. The latest example is the $66 million Sega World entertainment centre housed in a distinctive glass-coned building on the eastern side of Darling Harbour in Sydney.

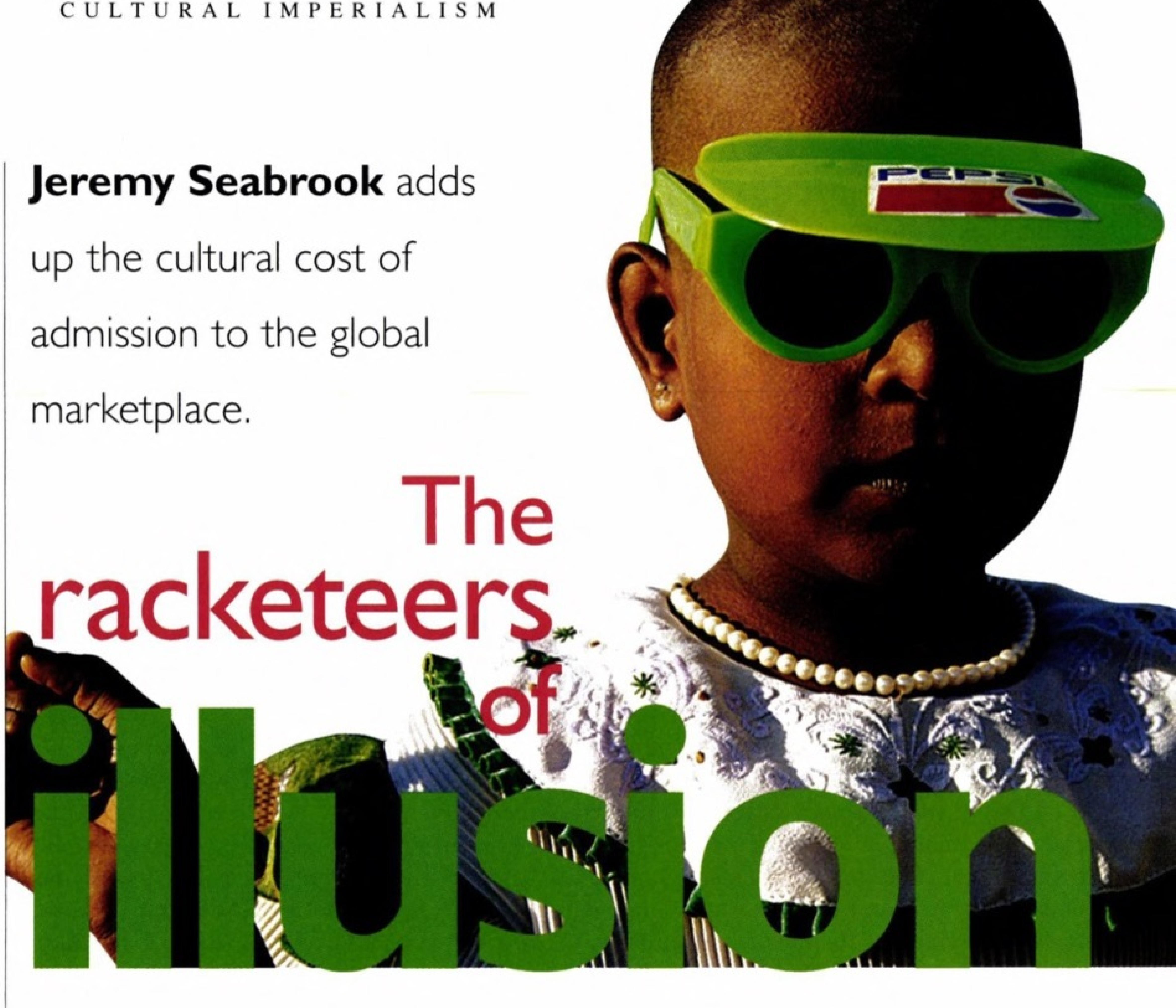
As Japanese scholar Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto has shrewdly observed, in the postmodern age America has become another brand name – just like Chanel and Armani. The danger is that this seductive new world of themed and branded entertainment will be one where any sense of common purpose or true citizenship is swamped by 'made-in-America' fantasies. ■

John Hannigan is Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto and is the author of *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (Routledge, 1998).

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

Jeremy Seabrook adds up the cultural cost of admission to the global marketplace.

The racketeers of illusion



PIERS BENATAR / PANOS PICTURES

WITH the creation of a single world market all societies yield in some measure to Western dominance. A superficially convergent culture emerges in which certain industries are crucial – entertainment, fashion and tourism, the visual media, sport, pop music and the cult of celebrities. For instance, few places in the world remained untouched by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, perhaps the first icon of globalization. The generation of mass grief for someone whom most had never met suggests a vast reservoir of exploitable emotion.

But each society mediates global market culture differently. We hear much about pluralism and diversity, not least from the enthusiasts of globalization. This is, perhaps, to convince the world that despite the rigid neo-liberal economic orthodoxy now established globally, a great variety of cultural forms remains.

Of course Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism are not going to be obliterated, any more than is Christianity, by its bastard offspring, consumerism. Cultural identities are not submerged by McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken, any more than linguistic diversity is extinguished by the universal *lingua franca* of money.

This is not the point. Cultural identities remain, but under the impact of the market economy they are modified and 'commodified' – and the change is always in the same direction. Just as in the West religious festivals like Christmas have become orgies of consumption, so a similar shift is happening in other societies. The significance of the celebration remains, yet it is subordinated to a higher purpose. Christmas is now the major marketing highlight of the year.

In the countries of the South, too, festivals that lend themselves to showy and expensive display become strengthened.

Divali, the great festival of light in India, has become both dangerous, through the sale of fireworks, and expensive, through an increasingly costly exchange of gifts. Similarly, in some Muslim countries the fasting month of *Ramadan* has been transformed by the consumerist ethos into something contrary to its purpose. The daily dawn-to-dusk fast, intended to check greed and develop self-restraint, turns into a self-indulgent feasting at the end of each day. In Malaysia, many hotels now offer extravagant *buka-puasa* (breaking of fast) buffets.

What is sometimes referred to as the 'disneyfication of culture' can be seen in its clearest form in Europe. Here, it means a market-driven heritage industry. Anyone travelling through Western Europe now will find virtually identical malls and gallerias, displaying the same logos and brand-names. The main distinguishing feature comes from the selling of the past: the medieval cathedral, the riverside, the royal palace and the city walls. The historical remains are embalmed, and sold in the form of T-shirts, embossed mugs and ashtrays. Quaint shops of the pedestrianized 'Old Quarter' will offer a local delicacy like paté or a speciality alcohol like Orvieto or Schnapps. Cultural variations have been enclosed and frozen in antique marketable clichés – French preoccupation with haute cuisine, Spanish celebration of the bullfight or Italian passion and grand opera.

Is this the fate of the great civilisations of the world? Are the real cultural differences that remain only signs of the degree of integration into the global market, which will eventually find their way into the sacrosanct museums of mass tourism?

It is perhaps too early to say. The market does not simply obliterate all earlier traditions. It is opportunistic. It will enhance and concentrate those features of a society which turn a profit or change them in such a way that they will make money. At the most basic level, everywhere in the world local homely things, familiar artefacts and goods, become archaic and shameful when set against the sophisticated results of mass production. Baskets of bamboo and grass give way to bright-red plastic buckets; plates and cups made of leaves are ousted by metal and glass; neem-twigs for teeth-cleaning are replaced by Colgate; soapberries yield to Lux and the fruits and nuts of the jungle are supplanted by Cadbury or Nestlé.

Palatable Veg-burger

But even superficial assaults on traditional customs do not always have their own way. The resistance to McDonald's in India is by now an old story. The enormous investment in finding a palatable veg-burger has not replaced traditional Indian snacks or reshaped Indian tastes. In 1995, the KFC outlet in Bangalore was destroyed by demonstrators who objected to such attempts.

Imported cultural activities associated with entertainment and enjoyment do have a deeper effect. Aimed specifically at the young, they soften up a new generation so that it will learn a new set of human purposes. A universal Western iconography of affluence and luxury eats into the consciousness of the peoples of the world; not altering identity, but opening up the psyche in such a way as to make acceptable, not only the sweets, but also the asperities of a capitalism become cosmos.

The garden of delights purveyed by Disney, Mattel or Time-Warner to the people of the South is a carefully crafted myth, a US ideological artefact. It serves to demobilize the poor in the places where they live, where they suffer poverty and insecurity. Hope becomes increasingly concentrated in the distant and exotic. Delight is found, not in celebrating their own lives and achievements, but in admiration of the shadowy celebrities of film and pop videos. This undermines people's faith in themselves, diminishes their own capacity to find significant cultural satisfactions in their own deeds and achievements. Everywhere in the world there is a loss of conviction that what is ancient and traditional is of value. This is the 'cultural cost' of admission to the market economy.

Children have been transformed into 'kids' by consumer culture: a single word denotes a profound mutation in the growth and development of the young. When they grow up they will be open to the further colonizing of their minds. For just as childhood is now occupied territory, where the entertainment conglomerates have built their empire, so the educational system is becoming penetrated by the dreams of an international business culture.

From Delhi to São Paulo there are millions of youthful aspirants to the possession of a Master's in Business Administration or a diploma or certificate in Business Studies. The young people whose imagination has been seized by this version of Western culture are highly visible in the Third World. They carry textbooks written in an impenetrable English which suggests the study of hermeneutics rather than the practicalities of business. In their enthusiasm and eagerness, they believe that possession of a certificate will magically open doors to lifelong wealth and security: infinite possibilities, endless choices, prizes and free gifts.

Business culture has swept through South Asia with the power of an irrational cult. It is clear that the vast majority of these hopeful young people will find no place in the global culture to which they aspire. They are victims of the latest fad formulated in the West, the newest version of a colonialism designed to pacify yet another generation, to provide them with a hope of non-existent careers and a future of elusive wealth and absent leisure.

India and Bangladesh are full of unemployed graduates. A generation ago their counterparts would have been studying (Western) politics and sociology and before that liberation struggles and the threat of neo-colonialism. They would have been quoting Marx and Fanon, consumed with a shining-eyed conviction that they would inherit the earth.

It is the children and grandchildren of these people who now dream instead of business success, a fantasy fed by the imagery of Disney fairy-tales and Lorimar TV films. They're wishing on a star because they've seen a world where poverty has been banished, where miracles of a strictly economic kind occur, where evil is thwarted by a happy-ever-after of hi-tech luxury, a mixture of lottery-winner materialism and cartoon, infantile omnipotence.

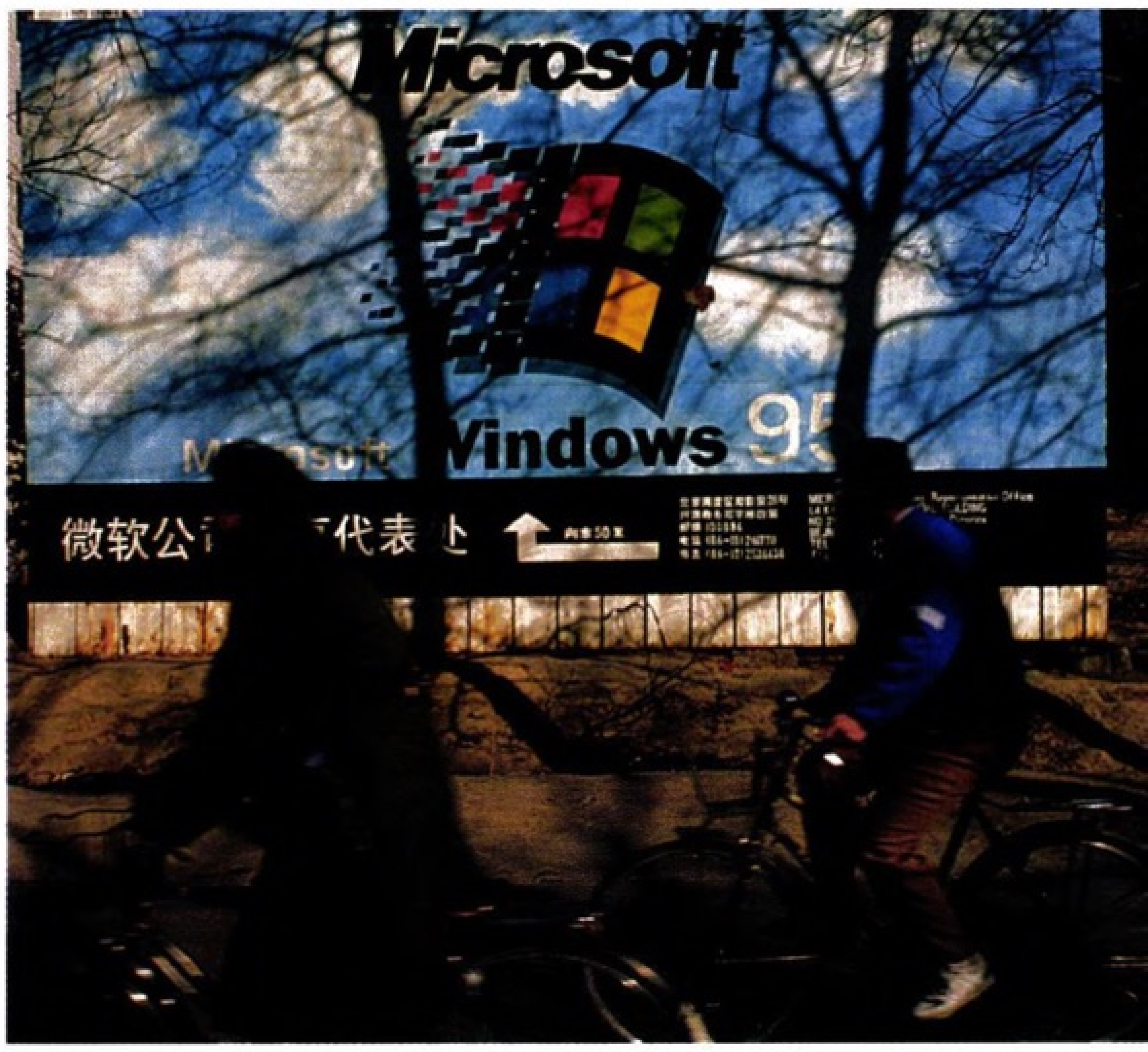
Sexual partners

The grafting of this business gospel onto kids' consumer culture has been going on long enough now that many have already become bitterly disappointed by the promises implicit in their social and educational experience. The qualifications are there. But there are no jobs, no prizes, no rewards.

Two responses emerge to the disillusionment that follows the realization that yet another generation has been cheated. First is a desire to escape. A desperate urge to move out: to a job in the Gulf, any job. Driving, domestic service, factory labour, security guard. Anything that provides an income. They attach themselves to foreigners, offer themselves as cleaners, cooks, houseboys, sexual partners, anything that will take them to the West. The result is a generation disturbed in its sense of place and identity.

This leads many to the second response. Able young men are recruited by criminal gangs. A world of extortion, blackmail, protection money and drug-dealing exists in every slum from Dhaka to Recifé. Some gangs are connected to political parties, some are the fall-out from corruption of those in legitimate jobs – in the police, port authorities, customs, property speculation, real estate, film industries or prostitution. All offer rich pickings for criminal activities. A caricature of glamour and business is fused at last in the lengthening shadow cast by the global market.

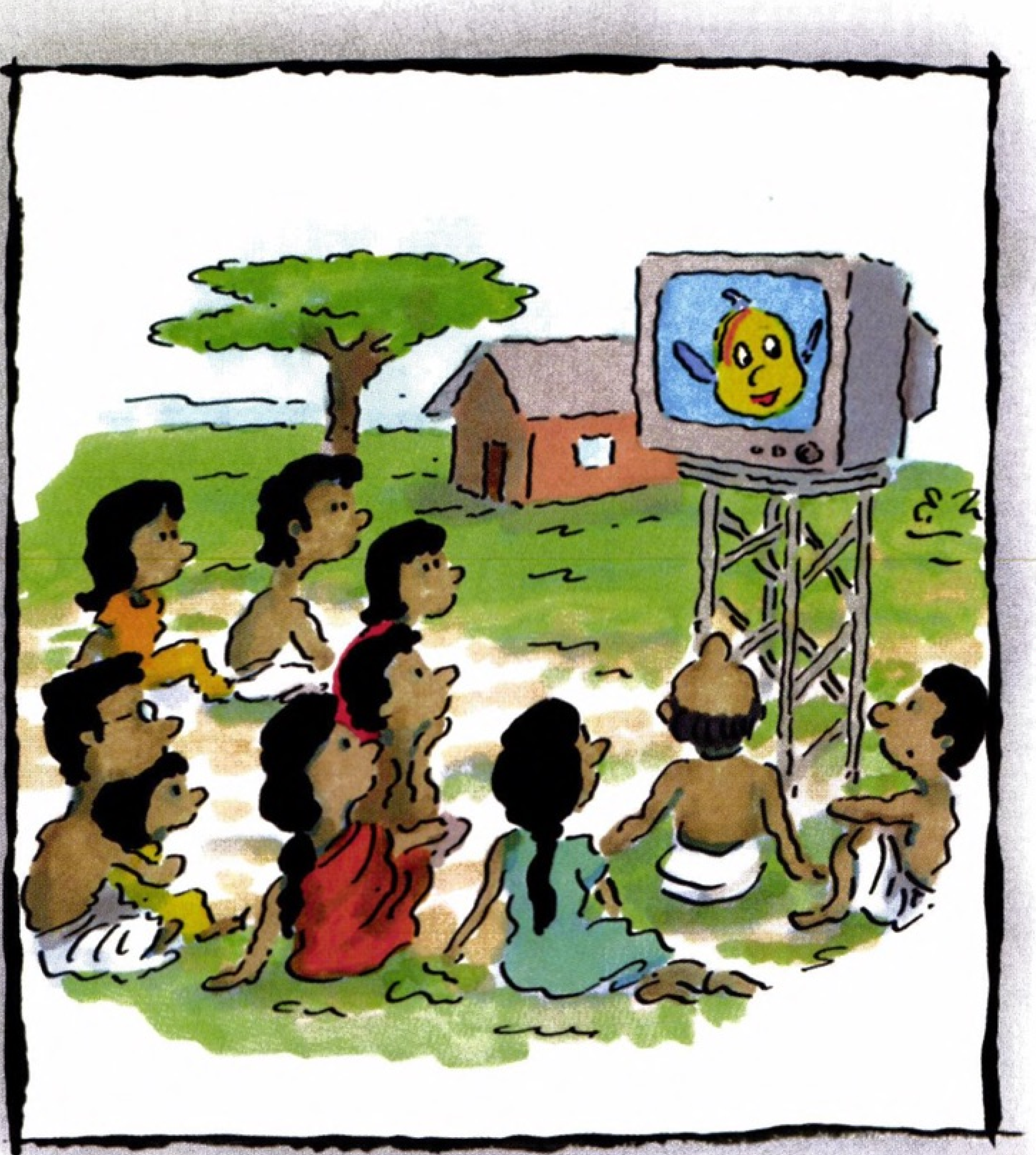
FRITZ HOFFMAN / THE IMAGE WORKS



Microsoft comes to Beijing: cultural identities are 'commodified' by the market economy.

The racketeers of illusion who've made their fortunes do not care about the fate of the young people betrayed, the swallowers of the fictions. For most of these have no choice but to make their way in the ruined and ravaged places in which business fortunes are indeed made, but by outsiders, those practised in the truly magic arts of filtering wealth from poor to rich. Pity the young inheritors of broken hopes and a future used up in advance. ■

Jeremy Seabrook is a journalist and author living in London and a frequent contributor to **NI.** His latest novel is *Colonies of the Heart*, GMP, London, 1998.



A Reader's Guide to 'Disneyfica

If you have young children you can't escape Walt's world. Disney's ubiquitous characters gaze out from T-shirts and lunch boxes; commercials for the latest Disney animated film blanket children's TV programming. And Disney comics reach even the most isolated rural regions. The Disney machine has touched us all, spreading the values of the marketplace, colonizing the fantasy life of children and changing the world irrevocably in the process. Here's a potted summary of the impact of 'disneyfication' on daily life.

THE COLONIZED MIND

American media conglomerates like Disney and Time-Warner, publishing giants like Germany's Bertelsmann and Australia's Rupert Murdoch have near-monopoly control of global news and entertainment. Not just the hardware and the wires but also, increasingly, the content. The result is Western (mainly American) domination of most forms of popular culture, especially books, music, movies, television and film.

Does this mean that sooner or later we'll all be American? Probably not. But it does mean that local communities are less able to identify and nurture their own dreams and create their own self-identity through a common project of shared imagination. Centuries of tradition are eroded by the technically dazzling but culturally-biased products of the corporate entertainment industry. Goodbye to Hindu classics like the *Ramayana* and the age-old folk tales of Africa, hello *Baywatch* and *Geraldo*.

DEATH OF DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity mirrors the biological and geographical diversity of our planet. 'Disneyfication', like economic globalization, tends to ride roughshod over local variety. So baseball hats, blue jeans and running shoes become the uniform of teenagers in both Budapest and Bangalore while Western TV shows promote the illusion of limitless wealth. This process is not the same as different artistic traditions learning from each other and sharing ideas freely. Cross-fertilization and borrowing from other cultures has invigorated and strengthened both Western and Third World arts. Think of Gauguin in Tahiti or the jazz-influenced sounds of Ghanaian high-life music. Great art prospers from contact with the outside world. But corporate culture is different: its guiding principles are efficiency and profit and there is a tendency for those goals to steamroller both diversity and authenticity.

MARKET CULTURE

Cultural uniformity goes hand-in-glove with the cheer-leading for free markets heard in agencies like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Efforts to open borders to 'cultural exports' have been at the heart of free-trade negotiations. Western countries like France and Canada and Third World nations like Malaysia have fought hard to restrict imports of foreign films, books and magazines to protect their own heritage. And cultural nationalists everywhere are concerned that international trade agreements like the Multilateral Treaty on Investment (MAI) would catalyze the Americanization of global culture. If passed, the MAI would limit the ability of national governments to impose domestic content standards

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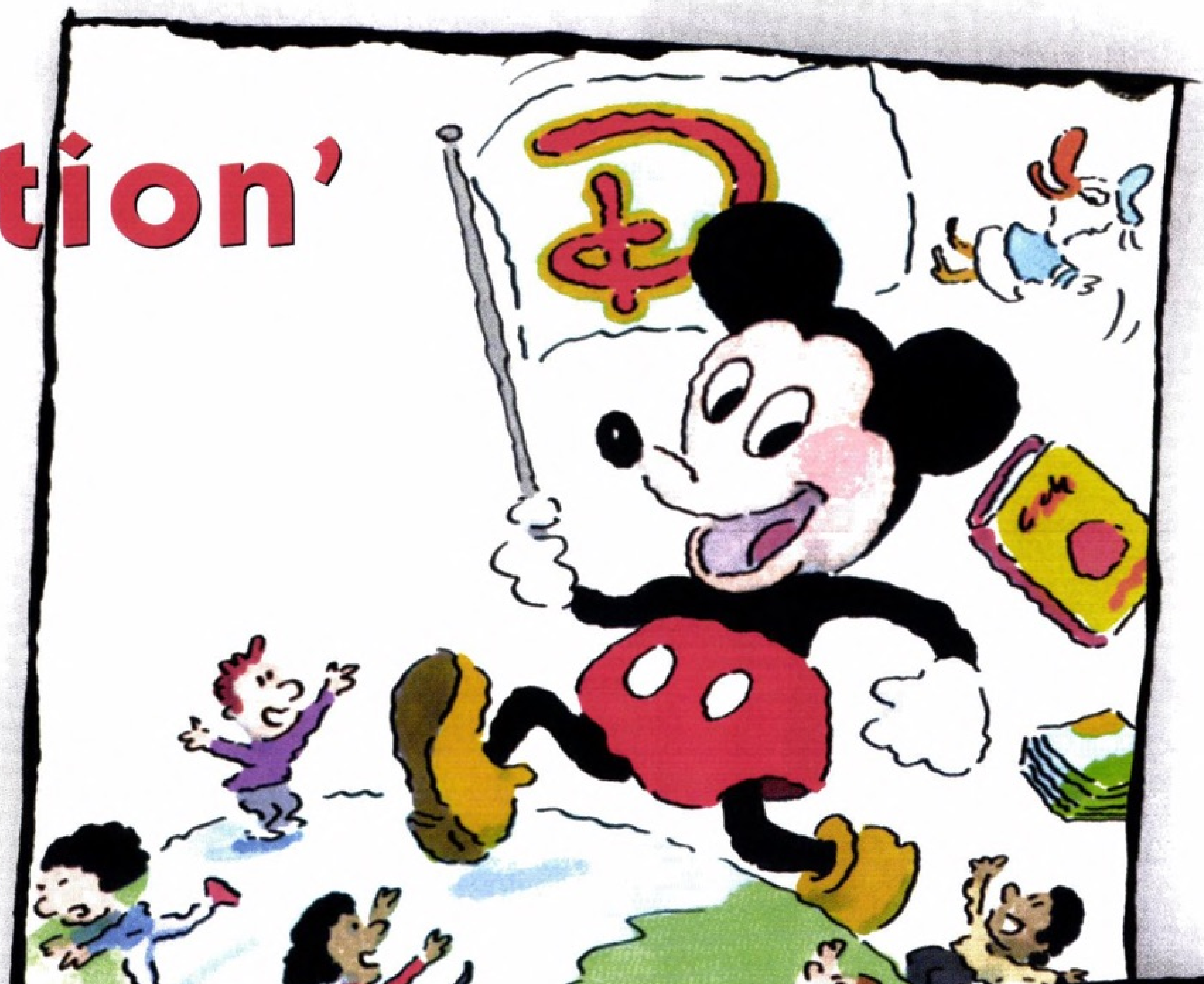


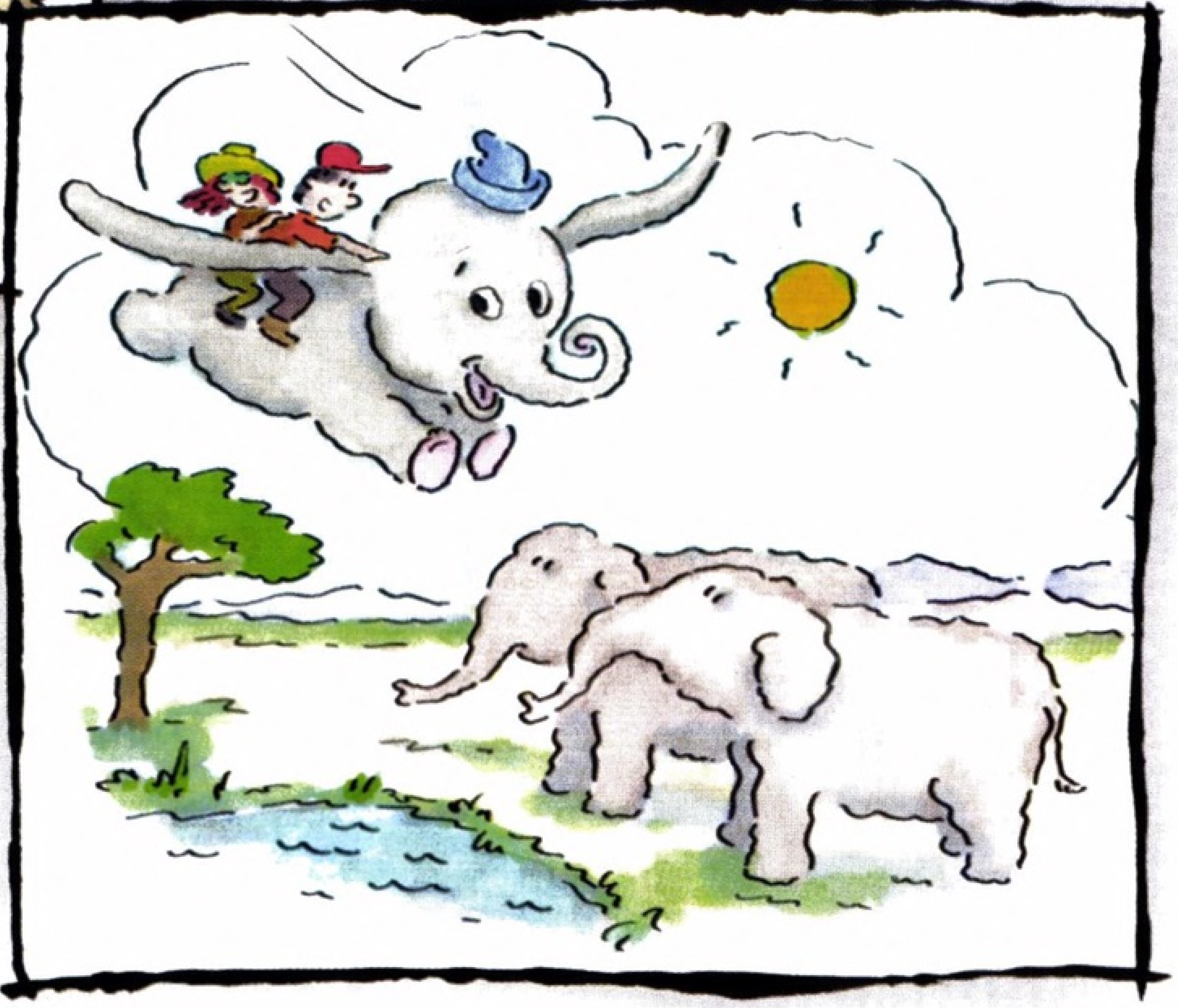
BORN TO SHOP

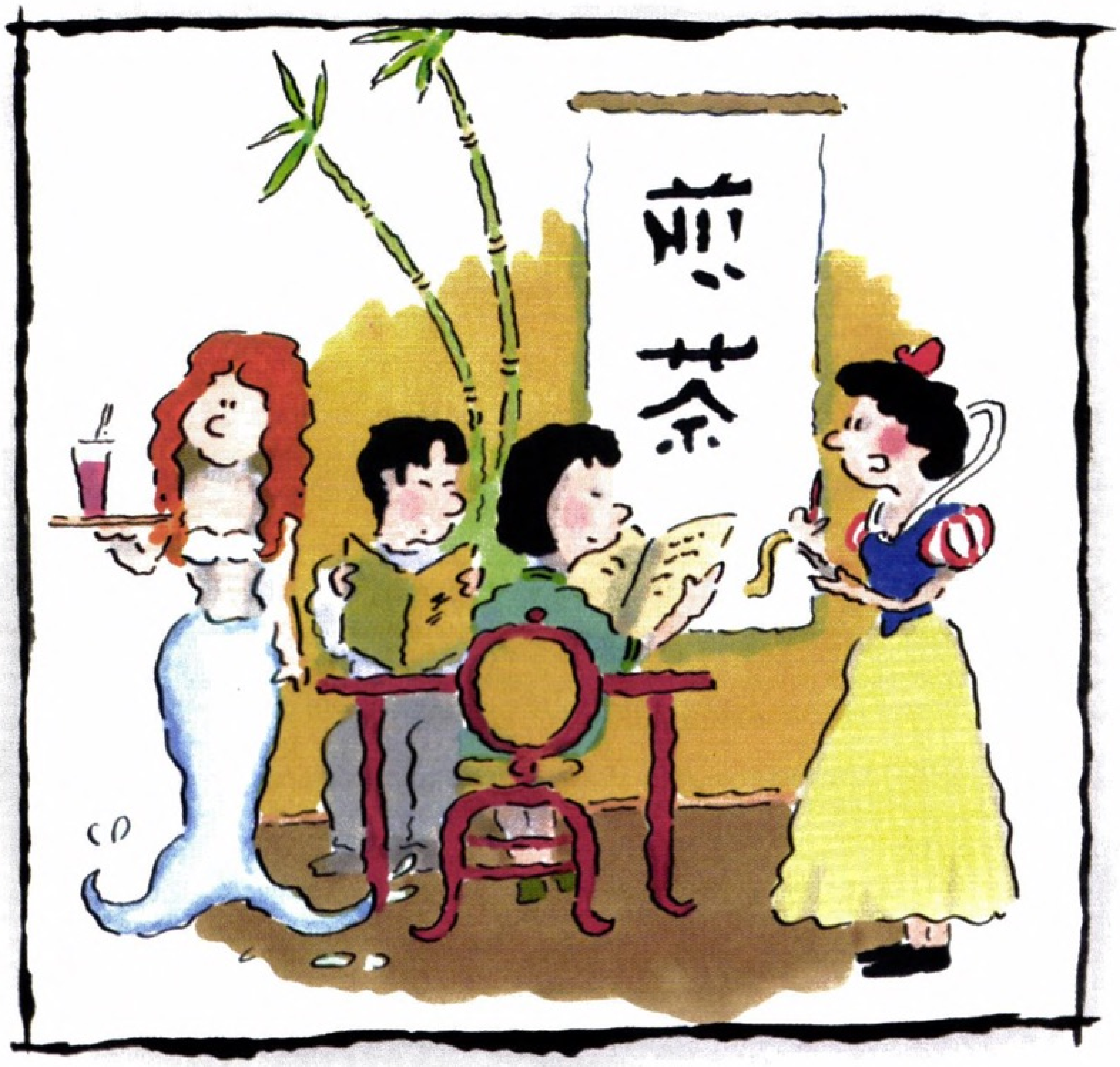
The spread of American movies, music and fashion is as much about buying as culture. In fact the fusion of consumerism with the arts, entertainment and sport is now widespread. Olympians are sponsored by Nike, jazz festivals are funded by tobacco companies and rock singers strike marketing deals with soft-drink firms. Disney and his corporate cohorts (Reebok, McDonald's, KFC, Coke, Armani, Hilfiger et al) are the shock troops for the spread of consumer society. They prime the pump for the endless stream of 'wants' created by corporate hucksters. You can take your kids to see the newest Disney animated film, *Mulan*, and then you can buy the video, the key chain, the stuffed toy, the sweatshirt, the embossed note pad and pencil set. Every Disney animated film comes bundled with a complete marketing strategy for merchandise, interactive games and a line of children's books.

World

NATURE UNDER CONTROL

The rise of a corporate monoculture accelerates our separation from the natural world. Concern for the destruction of the environment becomes a 'sales opportunity' for slick PR pitch-men while the promotion of frivolous consumer goods continues the assault of industrial production on the earth's finite resources. Despite attempts to pass itself off as a good corporate citizen, the Disney view of nature generally reflects the view that all environmental problems can be overcome by technology and human ingenuity. Sound familiar? It should. It's the same conceit that animates industrial society in general and the main reason catastrophe threatens the natural world today.





THEME PARK EARTH

Disney's theme parks in Florida, California, Tokyo and Paris were the first and most successful attempts to meld entertainment with consumerism. They are fantasy worlds cut off from the anxieties and fears of daily life where you can temporarily escape the 'rat race' to join Mickey, Donald and Goofy in a clean and carefree land of the imagination. We all need to escape the stress of daily life from time to time. But the Disney theme park idea has metastasized and in the process it's become a dominant model for both urban and commercial development. Chain eateries, mega shopping malls, redeveloped city centres: all feature the same mix of escapism and consumerism. In the process the values of the market elbow aside the democratic aspirations of civil society. As the public realm shrinks we risk turning the Earth and our unique communities into one big, privatized theme park.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SCOT RITCHIE.

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23·IX
SARAJEVO

MAIN PHOTO: BRIAN MEADE / CAMERA PRESS; PHOTOS INSET: PETER LIPPMAN

Sarajevo street posters promote Western pop music (left). Vujanovic (below right) and Hadzic (bottom): will Bosnia retain its identity in the face of increasing influences from abroad?

Elvis and slivovitz

As a towering wave of Western culture washes over the globe, age-old traditions are pushed to the side in an unsteady transition to an unknown future. **Peter Lippman** wonders what will happen in war-torn Bosnia.

I walk through the open-air market in my adopted Bosnian home looking for an eggplant. The old woman selling vegetables is wearing a hand-woven shawl and a linen scarf with an ancient hand-embroidered geometrical motif. In the stall next to her a young man wears a T-shirt with the words 'Beverly Hills 90210'.

Twenty years ago you would have found hand-woven rugs for sale in the Tuzla market. Now there are factory-made carpets with pictures of Elvis or the Manhattan skyline.

Despite being nominally part of the Soviet bloc, Yugoslavia was wide open to Western culture by the early 1950s. Right into the 1980s, Yugoslav *gastarbeiters* (guestworkers) were traveling to Central and Western Europe, returning with the pocket radios, hairdryers and other consumer goods which symbolized prosperity.

Dada Hadzic, a 48-year-old construction engineer for a large state-owned building materials company had many friends who worked in the West. She smoked Marlboros in my kitchen as she explained: 'They found good work, for good pay. They'd bring with them those things that they considered progressive, part of "civilization". Televisions and tape players with batteries, that you didn't have to plug in. You could walk down the street with a tape player on your shoulder. That was terribly popular around 1965.

'When I was little I went to see all the Disney movies. Then when TV came, Western programs captured the fancy of young people.

'I remember when we saw *Gone with the Wind* with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh. All the men wanted to have a mustache like Clark Gable. Every actor was an ideal for someone.

'We may have lived under a communist government but we had really long necks to see the West.

'Many boys let their hair grow to look like the Beatles,' Dada remembers. 'And girls liked to look like Faye Dunaway or Catherine Deneuve.'

But despite Western influences some unique Bosnian traits seem to survive – including what Alma Ahmetbegovic calls the 'art of doing nothing'.

At 22 she works as a translator for the UN in Tuzla and lives alone with her mother in a highrise on the edge of the city. When I visited she was preparing to go to a *kafana* (pub) with her friends.

'I have a friend who lives in New York who wakes up at six and then takes two hours to get to her office,' Alma says with disbelief. 'She works until five, then she runs home. And she goes to school, too. I don't think a person from here would be interested in success at that price.'

Post-war Bosnian life goes on in spite of the devastation and massive unemployment. Summer afternoons are quiet and the evenings boisterous, dominated by the *korzo*, the traditional Mediterranean-style walk where everyone, especially young people, saunters out to see and be seen. Yet in the midst of this very traditional Bosnian event, walking past the *kafanas* with booming music and poster-sized pictures of Marilyn Monroe and Brad Pitt, Western influence is clearly visible. Restaurant signs brazenly proclaim 'Fast Food' in English.

But the majority of Bosnians are struggling. Production is only 20 per cent of its pre-war level and the average monthly income for those with work (about half the population) is just $200. Few people other than profiteers have the chance to do much more than dream about getting and spending in the Western fashion.

Nevertheless, the process of Bosnia's inclusion into the world economy continues. In pre-war Yugoslavia property was generally 'socially owned' – except for houses and small businesses. Now international aid is conditioned on privatization. Which means that ordinary citizens are about to lose their shirts while politicians, war profiteers and gangsters (between whom there are few distinctions) clean up behind the scenes.

Will Bosnia manage to retain any of its warm traditions in the face of increasing Westernization? And will it be able to stake out a place for itself as a sovereign country with something better than a colonized economy? Vojislav Vujanovic, a Sarajevo journalist and art critic is not optimistic.

'We don't produce anything ourselves, except *slivovitz* (plum brandy),' he snorts. 'Will the West allow our domestic factories to develop? I think they will give us as much as it takes to maintain a naked existence and nothing more. Enough that we can buy their products, but not produce them.'

Vujanovic's pessimism about Bosnia's economic prospects mirrors his sensitivity to the enormous cultural shifts taking place in his homeland. He's nervous. Perhaps with justification. ■

Peter Lippman is a freelance journalist based in Bosnia. He travels widely in ex-Yugoslavia.

Paman Gober in Yogya

Linda Kaun ***flips through some Disney comics with children in her Indonesian neighbourhood.***

'Hey, here's one about *Paman Gober* (Uncle Scrooge). Let's see what he's up to!' Three children and I are sitting on my front terrace in Yogyakarta reading Disney comics on a Sunday afternoon. *Kwik, Kwek, Kwak* and *Donal Bebek* (Huey, Duey, Louie and Donald Duck) have to help Uncle Scrooge because he's been working too hard and his blood pressure is too high. Uncle Scrooge agrees to a vacation on a secluded tropical island. After eating a huge lunch, setting up his lounge chair he shouts, 'I don't have any trouble relaxing, but I'm NOT going to do any exercise!'

'That's funny,' laughs nine-year-old Novi. '*Paman Gober* only likes money,' she says. 'And *Donal* had to trick him into doing *olah raga* (sports) so he'd be *sehat* (healthy).'

'Ya,' adds Agung, a 13-year-old boy. 'I like *Paman Gober* the best! He always makes something funny but a little strange happen.'

'Who are your favorite characters?' I ask Novi and her 11-year-old girl friend, Fenny. 'Winnie the Pooh and Pluto,' replies Novi. 'But I like Minnie too. She's nice to everyone, she likes to joke and tease, she flirts with Mickey and she likes to draw.'

'Any others you all really like?'

'Ya, *Gufi* (Goofy),' they all say at once. 'He's so silly and funny too,' reflecting Indonesians' love of slapstick humor. Agung says, 'If there's a pretty girl he likes to flirt but if he sees something scary he always runs away fast.'

Fenny lives next door to me with her grandmother, parents, a younger sister and brother, and two *pembantu* (servants). Their house is only a few years old, built over rice fields in a 'modern' style. Her parents have a small 'mom-and-pop' store on the main street in Yogya, selling snack foods like *krupuk*, the shrimp crackers we eat with our meals and crispy, fried *tempe*, made from soy beans.

Like *Paman Gober*, Indonesia's élite let nothing stop them in their lust for gold. Now the major surgery required to bring this nation out of the lengthening *krisis monetar* (monetary crisis) is being paid at a high price by the 'mom-and-pop' shop-owners and the marginally employed – like the families of Fenny, Agung and Novi.

Before the *rupiah* devaluation in July 1997, a kilo of rice cost 1,000 *rupiah*. A family needs two kilos a day, which means at today's price of 3,300 *rupiah* a kilo, there is no money left over. Cooking oil was 350 *rupiah* a litre, now it's 1,100. A kilo of eggs went from 3,000 to 7,000. A simple pair of child's rubber sandals costs 15,000 *rupiah* while the salary of a middle-class civil servant is only 11,000 a day.

'So how do you know about Disney?' I ask.

All three say they watch the hour-long *Klab Disney* (Disney Club) program on TV. The show features a mix of cartoons and filmed segments with a pair of live hosts. *Klab Disney* has been introducing Disney characters for the past two years to a weekly audience of at least three million, broadcasting to nearly 20 stations across this vast archipelago. Agung and Novi tell me it was only through the TV that they became Disney fans.

Some older friends, Nita Purwanti and Adji Putranto, a thirty-something, middle-class couple say they encountered Disney's characters in their teenage years when official Disney products first came to Indonesia. Their son, Intang, was 'bathed with *Donal Bebek* soap, covered with Mickey Mouse blankets and had dolls, hats, T-shirts, school supplies, all with the familiar Disney images on them'.

'And how about the comics? Do you often read them?' I ask Novi and Agung.

Even though they don't have the money to buy them, they read Disney comics 'at friends' houses or sometimes at school'. There are many comics to choose from like *Wonder Woman* and *Batman*, Indonesian folk-tales and a whole range of Japanese action comics such as *Dragon Ball* and *Samurai*.

'How is Disney different?' I inquire.

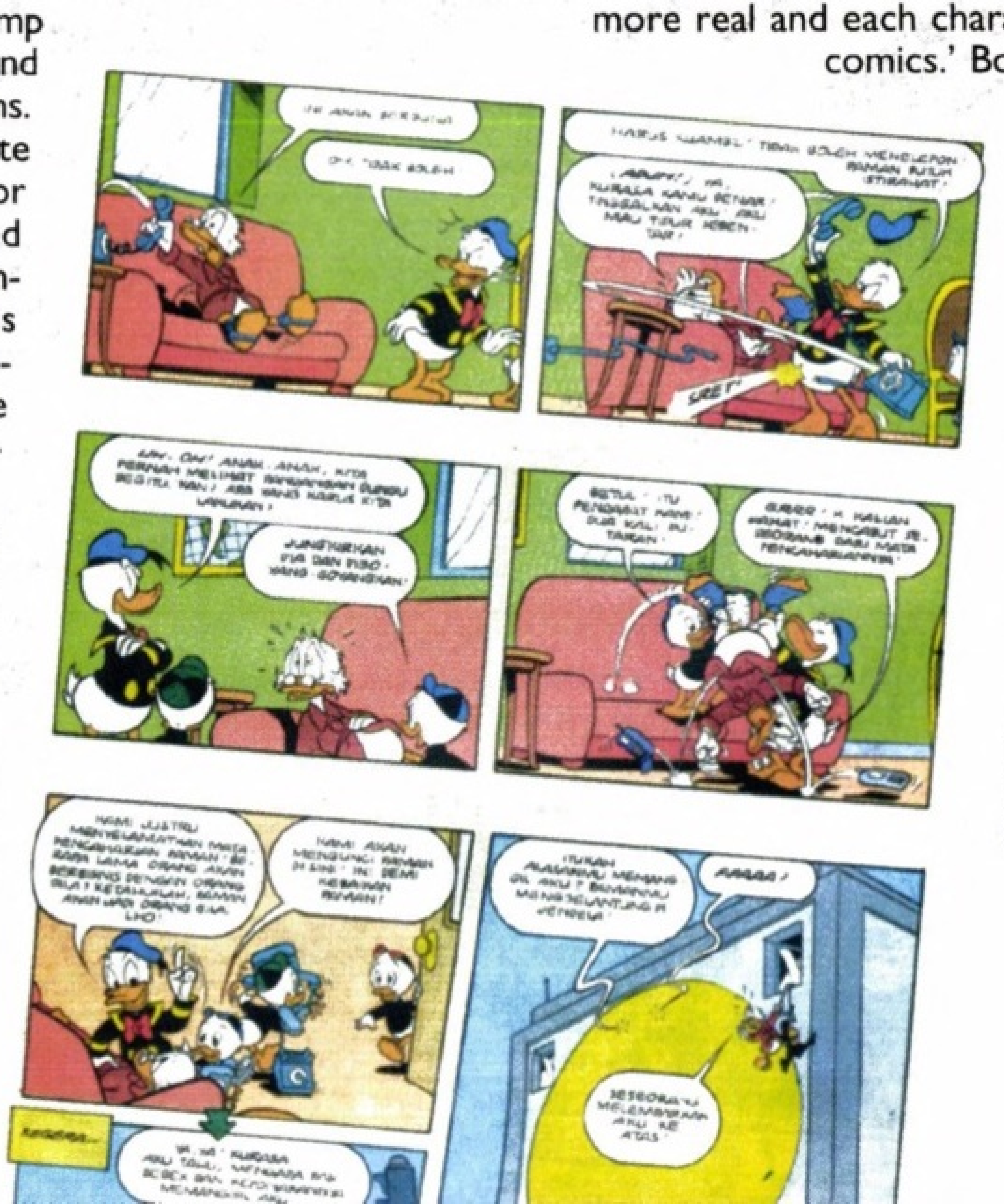
'Disney is funnier,' they all shout. Fenny says: 'The drawings are more real and each character doesn't look the same like in the other comics.' Both girls say they choose Disney because 'the stories are more interesting'. Meanwhile, Agung, like boys the world over, seems to prefer the action comic *Dragon Ball*. He likes 'the fights and yelling even though you know it's only pretending'.

But even as he grumbles about being *sudah bosan* (bored) when *Klab Disney* shows another *Chip and Dale* cartoon on the TV, he is soon laughing at their antics.

'Hey, what about Mickey Mouse?' I ask. 'What do you like about him?'

A long pause. Then Novi pipes up. 'I like that he loves Minnie!' They all giggle. ●

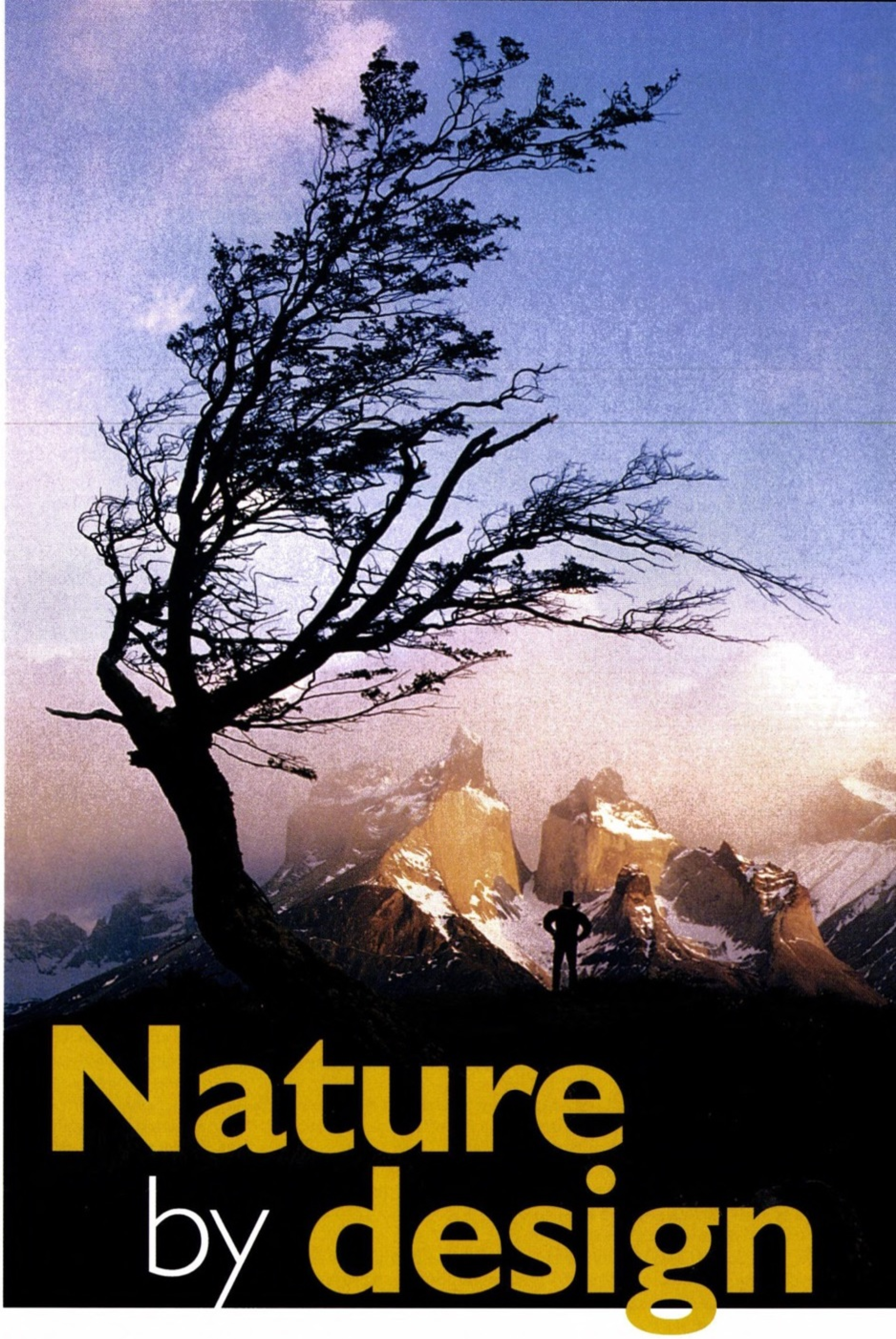
Linda Kaun, an American, lives with her Indonesian partner in Yogyakarta. She is a visual artist who takes the occasional foray into journalism.



Paman Gober, Donal Bebek and the boys, up to their tricks in Indonesian.

Nature by design

Chris Clarke on how Disney's treatment of animals has altered our sense of the wild and cleared the way for environmental decline.



GALEN ROWELL / STILL PICTURES

As the close of the twentieth century approaches and our world becomes more and more urban our knowledge of nature is increasingly second-hand. Those of us in cities, whose non-human neighbors tend toward rats, pigeons and dandelions, are dependent on the media for our understanding of the natural world – or at least that part of it not adapted to urban life. It is from movies, television and packaged tourism that we derive our sense of nature.

For the last half century, it has been Walt Disney and his corporate estate that have provided that sense. In doing so Disney has instilled an appreciation of nature in generations of media consumers. Many environmentalists and animal-rights activists credit Disney with awaking their concern for the environment.

But this appreciation has not been delivered in a value-free package. From the outset Disney's nature films have supported the notion that the natural world's chief value lies in the profit that industrial society can extract from it. At first this support took the form of simple paeans to the righteousness of logging, mining and urban development. Now, amidst the increasing commodification of everything from tribal myth to basmati rice, the value extracted from nature is the right to define nature. Disney covets that right and will gain it at our peril.

Not much besides hindsight distinguishes the company's early work from its predecessors and competitors. Where nature appeared, it was in its traditional role of deadly threat, or in the form of humanoid cartoon animals.

It wasn't until *Bambi* (1942) that Disney found the framework on which his later nature work would hang. Rather than living obviously human lives, wearing clothes, guiding a plough or at the helm of a steamboat, the animals in *Bambi* were far closer to the real thing. They weren't humans; that role was reserved for the film's villain. They were, however, people. So that the death of Bambi's mother at the hands of the Hunter is clearly murder.

Bambi was the prototype for Disney's later nature work, most notably the 'True-Life Adventures', a series of what were loosely referred to as documentaries, set in habitats from the Sonoran Desert to the Canadian tundra.

Animal Stars

Rather than go through the arduous and costly process of filming actual wildlife, captive animals were coached to follow scripts. The results documented the intentions of the filmmakers far more than they did the behaviour of the animal stars. Yet from Disney's first such work, 1948's *Seal Island*, viewers readily accepted the films as authentic portrayals of nature.

The distortions in Disney's nature films were part of a grand North American literary and artistic tradition. Painters of the Hudson River School took liberties with such trivia as proportion and scale. Writers like Ernest Thompson Seton enthralled hundreds of thousands of readers with stories such as those in *Wild Animals I Have Known*. The tales were exciting, went into great detail about the lives of wild animals and coincided only occasionally with reality. By 1910 Seton and his cohorts had been thoroughly discredited as the 'nature fakers'. Naturalist John Burroughs referred to Seton's magnum opus in the *Atlantic Monthly* as *Wild Animals I Alone Have Known*.

Perhaps with an eye to the nature fakers' ignominy, Disney admitted the subjectivity in his True-Life Adventures series from the outset, claiming that his purpose was not to educate but to entertain. Critics blasted the films' ecological inaccuracies anyway. Disney referred to animals as 'courageous', 'jolly', 'lonely', 'treacherous' and other terms best suited to a human ethical framework. Animal mothers were praised or condemned based on how closely their parental care standards coincided with the idealized model of an American family from the 1950s. In *Bear Country* the writers created an entity never before seen in nature: a bonded pair of bear parents in which Mama became a sort of 'den-wife' while Papa went out to bring home the bacon. Presumably the spectacle of Papa deciding the little cubs were a suitable meal, as would likely happen in the wild, wouldn't have sold well.

Probably the most egregious misrepresentation of True Life occurred in *White Wilderness* (1958). The film crew brought a handful of lemmings from Manitoba to Alberta, placed them atop a large, snow-covered turntable, and filmed their movements from various angles. Later the crew brought the rodents to a precipice above a river and herded them off, faithfully recording the lemmings' fatal leap.

In the film the lemmings were portrayed as engaged in a suicidal migration marching en masse to drown in the sea, or at least what passes for sea in landlocked Alberta. The fact that no such behaviour had ever been documented in lemmings was of little import to the filmmakers, nor to much of the audience. With *White Wilderness*, Disney demonstrated the power of the 'mockumentary' as a tool for shaping perceptions of wildlife. People who know nothing else about lemmings 'know' that lemmings march to the sea and drown themselves. The species has become symbolic of thoughtless, mass self-destruction, based on behaviour the filmmakers made up.

Formulaic plots

In the 1960s Disney's nature work moved out of the realm of 'documentary' and into a genre Seton would have understood: the animal story. Here the trappings of objectivity were shed; humans moved back into center stage. The plots were formulaic. A young male wild animal is adopted by a person of soft heart. The animal grows up in a human household, until its wild energy and instincts make domestic life impossible. After the animal destroys a kitchen, flour and eggs strewn about, the stove upended and the place set ablaze, soft-heart regretfully releases the now-adult animal into a sanctioned wilderness area where it immediately finds a wife and the credits roll.

The animal stories centered on conflict with industry. In *Charlie, The Lonesome Cougar*, the eponymous cat wreaks inadvertent havoc in the timber mill where his owner works as a forester. In *Sammy the Way-Out Seal*, the star (actually a sea lion) sabotages a plan to raze a small town for corporate development. Wahb, the protagonist of *King Of The Grizzlies*, terrifies the hands on the ranch whose fringes he stalks. *King Of The Grizzlies*, incidentally, was adapted from a book by Seton.

Resource extraction is shown as an age-old part of nature. In the spring, saw-logs float down the river as cattle present their hindquarters for branding. The wild animals in these films, centaurs at the wedding, upset the natural order of resource extraction and must therefore be managed, kept in places where they won't interfere with natural industrial cycles. Fragile human society is saved by relegating the devastating wild to its sanctuaries and the wild is happy to be segregated. Disney made this inversion of environmental politics plausible and compelling.

A third genre, typified by *The Horse In The Gray Flannel Suit* and *The Incredible Journey*, presented us with animals anthropomorphized enough that they might have been played by a human repertory troupe. The ecological content of these films was often lacking, though *Incredible Journey*, the story of three marooned pets making their way home across the wilderness, did present an almost-paradoxical message. The animals were so thoroughly 'people' that wilderness resumed its traditional threatening role.

One could argue that such fictional films were no more destructive to our understanding of nature than are Aesop's fables or Grimm's fairy-tales. It would be hard to picture a society that imbued no human qualities to any animal in its mythology. If Disney had limited his animal movies to the obviously fanciful, his impact on our perceptions of nature would not be nearly so worthy of discussion. But Disney's work blends seamlessly from the *Horse In The Gray Flannel Suit* to *White Wilderness* and these seemingly innocuous films must be analyzed in the context of the whole. By themselves, they're arguably innocent frivolity. Alongside the more 'serious' nature work they reinforce Disney's extension of human standards across species lines.

Millions of people saw these films. First released to theatres, many were later edited and serialized for broadcast on Disney's long-running television show. Some were made available to schools which undermined any non-instructional intent on the part of the filmmakers. Children were shown these movies as parts of a nature curriculum and usually accepted them as factual.

Reinforcing the lessons of Disney's nature movies were the 'wilderness' components of the company's theme parks. First among these was an attraction at the first Disneyland in Anaheim, California. 'The Jungle Cruise' treated boat passengers to a carefully orchestrated display of 'tropical' foliage and mechanical fauna, grouped together with little regard for their continents of origin.

'Mine Train Through Nature's Wonderland', a later Anaheim attraction, was based closely on the True-Life Adventures series. The Mine Train took visitors from 'the little mining town of Rainbow Ridge' through a disjointed series of caricatures of North American natural environments. As in the later animal movies the gateway to the 'wilderness' of Nature's Wonderland was a center of resource extraction, reinforcing the notion that such industry is not only compatible with, but intrinsic to nature appreciation.

Then there's Disney World, the gargantuan park at the headwaters of the Everglades in Florida, essentially a major city in a fragile ecosystem. A chronicle of the environmental damage brought by this resort would require volumes. Two particular Disney World features especially merit mention. One is a 'Wilderness Lodge' that seeks to recreate the experience of a real National Park Lodge – without the dirt and bugs and *with* 725 rooms and four restaurants.

Flattened fauna

There's also the Disney Wilderness Preserve, a much-heralded (by Disney) wetland area of about 10,000 acres set aside for local wildlife which includes bald eagles, crested caracaras, wood storks and sandhill cranes. Disney boasts that wildlife occupies this reserve in rather high concentrations, unsurprising given that any nearby habitat has been destroyed by Disney-driven development. A four-mile trail through the Preserve, marked with officially-sanctioned interpretive information, allows guests to enjoy a brief glimpse of what all of Disney World used to be like and enables them to feel grateful that Disney World deigned to save this much before they slip back to the Wilderness Lodge for drinks. In the larger arena of Disney World, wildflowers are planted to create what Disney calls 'natural roadside habitat', presumably inhabited by flattened fauna. Hired landscapers are directed to restrict use of pesticides so as to allow 'good bugs' to eat 'bad bugs' – an application of Disney's ordered moral universe to the anthropod phylum.

The nature attractions borrow more than concept from Disney's nature films. They borrow pacing as well. Film editors quail at the hours of inactivity that characterize the natural world; a two-hour film may show enough vigorous activity to fill a year of an animal's actual life. Gone are the endless hours of silence, the slow changes in sky and light, the arduous and heavy-laden progress along a steep trail, that characterize much of the true wilderness experience. Seasons cycle in less time than it takes to get to the bottom of your popcorn bag. The complex and interwoven rhythm of nature,

KIM HEACOX / STILL PICTURES

Lunch is served: a non-Disney grizzly hunts salmon in Alaska's Katmai National Park.

plain to those who spend more than a few rushed days outside of cities, is lost, replaced by rhythms measured in frames per second.

Unless some filmmaker adopts Andy Warhol as a major influence, nature documentary isn't likely to escape this limitation. But by modelling its attractions after its nature films, Disney extends this distortion of nature's rhythms into what most take for real life. On the mine train, you can get from Arizona to Wyoming in five minutes. On the Jungle Cruise, you find predator after large predator leaping out from behind the cramped foliage. Even if you simply measure your four-mile Florida hike by the distance between interpretive signs, you're experiencing nature that has been strapped to the procrustean bed of industrial time.

What happens when people accustomed to this industrial nature are faced with a natural environment in unenhanced form? Where seasons change at the traditional pace, flowers don't open in time-lapse and the animals mostly hide or run away before you can see them? By comparison to nature in its disneyfied state, the simple swamp or desert valley floor will seem a flaccid, lifeless thing, its resident wildlife uninteresting and devoid of musical accompaniment, certainly of less value than the proposed shopping mall or airport. There's no nature there: nature is bears and big snakes and rams duelling to the Anvil Chorus. Who could thus oppose a Disney-style development in which a few of the original plants would be preserved and labelled for our enjoyment?

In 1995, Disney reached an agreement with most of the land management agencies in the US federal government. Under the agreement Disney would begin to provide interpretive services for visitors to public lands. Since then Disney has provided 'tour guide training' to federal land managers at posh symposia in Orlando. The American Recreation Coalition (ARC) – a corporate-sponsored group to which Disney is a major donor – is pressuring Washington to actively promote commercial recreation on public lands. As a majority of US park visitors favor industrially-oriented tourism, ARC has enjoyed widespread support. Soon those seeking quietude in the back-country may find themselves hemmed in by heli-skiing sightseers, snowmobilers, powerboaters and camper vans heading for the newest Disney Wilderness Lodge and Visitor Center.

It's ironic that those beleaguered backpackers may well have been inspired by Disney's films. Many of us found joy in the portrayals of wilderness unfettered by obvious human presence. There is power in the images of the wild that Disney brought us, power enough to lure thousands of former grade-school kids into a gradual appreciation of the wonderful, elusive subtlety of most of nature. Even Ernest Seton was eventually redeemed by the nature he'd faked, spending decades writing relatively accurate depictions of wilderness. He never matched the commercial success he found in nature fakery, but he did help defend habitats under threat and – one hopes – he felt better for his intimacy with the real thing. ■

Chris Clarke is editor of the San Francisco-based environment magazine *Earth Island Journal*.

Action and Worth Reading

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Children's Television Foundation,
C/-Bronwyn Hayward, 100 Ranfurly St., Christchurch 8001.
Tel: 03 379 7069 Fax 03 379 7329.
e-mail: hayward@lincoln.ac.nz

Australasian Performing Rights Assocation (APRA), PO Box 6315, Auckland.
Tel: 09 379 0638 Fax: 09 379 3205.
e-mail: greenribbon@voyager.co.nz
Website: www.greenribbon.org.nz

AUSTRALIA

Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007. Tel: 2 9514 2488;
Fax: 2 9281 2976. e-mail: acij@uts.edu.au

Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, Faculty of Arts, Griffith University, Brisbane, Qld 4111.
Tel: 7 3875 7772 Fax: 7 3875 5511.
e-mail: cmp@mailbox.gu.edu.au

BRITAIN

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 8 Cynthia St., London N1 9JF. Tel: 0171 278 4430;
Fax 0171 837 8868

Leeds Animation Workshop, 45 Bayswater Row, Leeds L58 5LS.
Tel/fax: 0113 248 4997.
e-mail: law@leedsanimation.demon.co.uk
Alternative, women-run animation collective producing cartoons that counter racist and sexist stereoptypes.

CANADA

Council of Canadians,
502 -151 Slater St, Ottawa ON K1P 5H3.
Tel: 613 233 2773 Fax: 613 233 6776.
e-mail: inquiries@canadians.org
Website: www.canadians.org/
Independent, non-partisan citizens' group campaigning against global free trade and investment including campaign on Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Maquila Solidarity Network, 606 Shaw St., Toronto ON M6L 3C6.
Tel: 416 532 8584 Fax: 416 532 7688.
e-mail: perg@web.net
Website: www.web.nwt./~msn
Anti-sweatshop campaign also focusing on Disney.

USA

Transnational Resource and Action Center, PO Box 29344, San Francisco CA 94129. Tel: 415 561 6567.
Website: www.corpwatch.org
Works to build global links for corporate accountability and runs Corporate Watch, online magazine and resource center.

National Labour Committee for Worker and Human Rights,
275 - 7th Avenue, New York NY 10001.
Tel: 212 242 3002 Fax: 212 242 3821.
Website: www.nlcnet.org
A spirited activist group which spearheads the labour-rights campaign in Haiti.

INTERNATIONAL

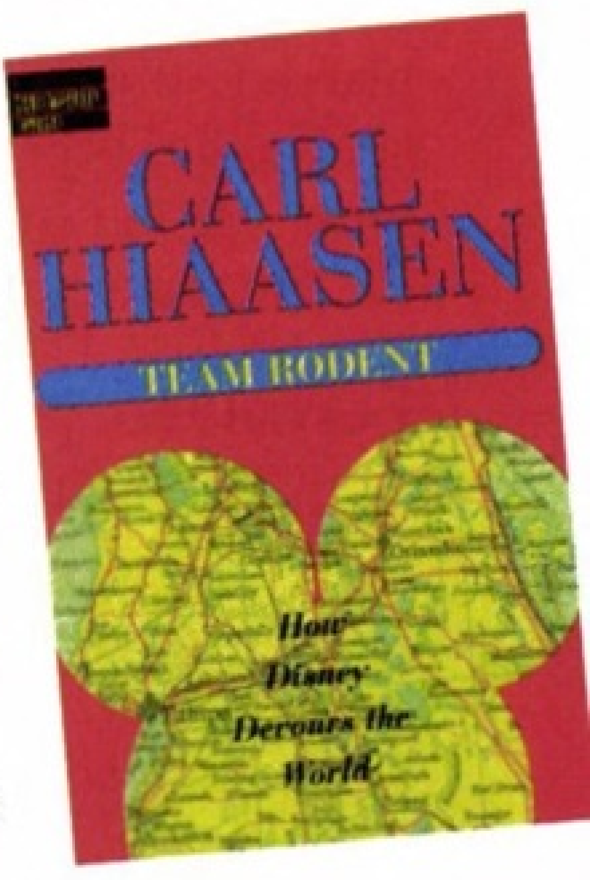
International Forum on Globalization, 1555 Pacific Ave., San Francisco, CA 94109.
Tel: 415 771 3394 Fax: 415 771 1121.
e-mail: ifg@ifg.org Website: www.ifg.org/
Alliance of citizens' groups from 40 countries.

Asia-Pacific Network (Pacific Media Watch), PO Box 78028, Auckland. Or Journalism Co-ordinator, University of the South Pacific, PO Box 1168, Suva, Fiji.
Website: www.asiapac.org.fj

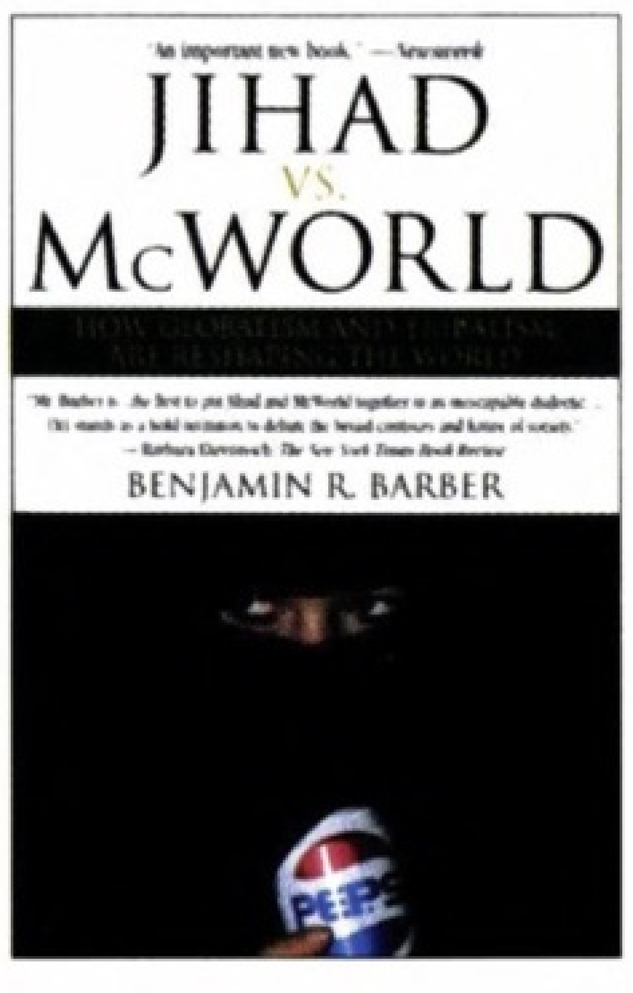
WORTH READING...

There's a small publishing industry out there dealing with Disney. Despite a spate of new biographies the classic is still Richard Schickel's *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney* (Simon and Schuster, 1968/1985), a thorough and entertaining sketch of Uncle Walt's life.

On the cultural theory side *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World* (Duke University Press, 1995) is worth a look, especially for 'Technological Utopias', an eye-opening piece by Alexander Wilson. A funnier and altogether more down-to-earth rant is Carl Hiassen's *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World* (Ballantine, 1998).



For a fact-laden and informative work on the new earth-spanning media conglomerates *The Global Media* by Edward S Herman and Robert W McChesney (Cassell, 1997) is as good a place to start as any. There is also an updated version of Ben H Bagdikian's classic *Media Monopoly* (Beacon Press, 1997) which should be in everyone's library. On the clash between Western culture and old-world values and identities Benjamin R Barber's *Jihad vs McWorld* (Ballantine Books, 1996) is both readable and provocative.



Useful periodicals include: *Extra!* (130 West 25 St, New York, NY 10001. Tel: 212 633 6700;
Fax: 212 727 7668. Website: www.fair.org), a bi-monthly magazine published by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a US watchdog group which looks at media bias, censorship and corporate control. *Earth Island Journal* (300 Broadway, Ste 28, San Francisco, CA 94133. Tel: 415 788 3666
Fax: 415 788 7324.
e-mail: journal@earthisland.org
Website: www.earthisland.org), a crusading environmental magazine with an edge and *Adbusters* (1243 West 7th Ave., Vancouver BC, Canada V6H 1B7.
Tel: 604 736 9401
Fax: 604 737 6021.
e-mail: adbusters@adbusters.org
Website: www.adbusters.org), a self-styled 'journal of the mental environment' offering humorous attacks on consumer culture.

The **NI** Interview

Billy Bragg

The British singer-songwriter talks with **Silja JA Talvi** about his career, his politics and a series of new recordings that breathe life into old Woody Guthrie songs.

BILLY BRAGG is a most unlikely pop music hero – well-mannered, flannel-shirted and decidedly unglamorous. Bragg has always placed greater emphasis on music and message than on a showy celebrity image. This is in part due to his strong grounding in oppositional politics.

After an explosive, genre-defying debut album in 1983, *Life's A Riot with Spy Vs Spy*, Bragg, a young musician from a working-class background, turned his attention to supporting the coalminers' strikes that polarized British class politics in 1984 and 1985. Fueled by the early influence of Britain's explosive punk scene and angered by the injustices which he saw being committed against working people, Bragg soon began to explore a political ideology to match his outrage.

'The people in the coal-mining villages who were involved in the struggle knew why they were there. But they couldn't understand why some pop star from London would want to be there. I found that I had to define my politics more in ideological terms, less in personal terms. By the end of the miners' strike I was defining myself as a socialist, clued in and looking for the next opportunity to defeat the Tories. It was Margaret Thatcher's "encouragement" that forced me to become ideologically politicized,' explains Bragg.

He committed himself to ousting the Conservative Government with the formation of Red Wedge. This musician-based pressure group attempted to influence the national debate and to politicize the nation's youth through the high-profile presence of rock and ska bands. 'We formed Red Wedge in order to focus in on the '87 election... to use the opportunity that we had in the [youth-oriented music] papers to have a debate about what we were voting for. We didn't go out and say, "People, vote Labour". We went out and said, "People, look at the issues – who is going to make a better society?"'

In subsequent years, Bragg was to attach himself to numerous political causes and benefits, ranging from the anti-apartheid movement to the support of pro-choice struggles. Despite having left school at the age of 16, Bragg continued to study and articulate sharp, intelligent commentaries on economic and social inequities. But he refuses to be pigeonholed solely as a 'political' songwriter.

With another Conservative victory in 1987, Red Wedge disbanded, although Bragg's ideals remained unshaken. In 1988, he released *Workers' Playtime*, with the slogan 'Capitalism Is Killing Music' unabashedly displayed on the album cover. But it was not until 1991's *Don't Try This At Home* that Bragg truly earned a widespread, international audience. In this album songs like 'Sexuality' highlighted a songwriting style of great warmth and honesty.

In 1992, Bragg was invited to play at Woody Guthrie's 80th birthday memorial concert, where he met Woody's daughter, Nora. The legendary US singer-songwriter is still alternately revered or disdained for his radical, pro-union protest songs. Guthrie's untimely death in 1967 from Huntington's chorea left behind an archive of unrecorded lyrics. After their initial meeting, Nora sensed that she had found the artist to interpret her father's remaining songs, and so convinced Bragg (along with American rock band Wilco) to embark on a project which resulted in this year's well-received *Mermaid Avenue*.

Although political themes are evident on the CD, one of the greatest pleasures for Bragg was 'finding a much more three-dimensional human being than the two-dimensional icon that history has made Guthrie into'. The songs on *Mermaid Avenue* do speak of political issues, but of love, lust and loneliness as well.

Taken together, Bragg maintains, Guthrie's lyrics are as relevant today as they were back when he wrote them 40 or 50 years ago: 'Words are very powerful; they're timeless in some ways... that makes you want to strive and articulate more honest things and be more unflinching about whatever it is that you're writing about. Politics change, but people don't.'

Even in the time in which Bragg himself has been writing and singing, the world has witnessed dramatic, historic changes. Bragg puts down the ever-evolving framework through which he articulates his thoughts and ideas not only to the changing political landscape, but also to the personal impact of his marriage and to the birth of his son, Jack.

'I've thought about this, about whether or not the way I feel about politics now is because Jack was born or because the Berlin Wall came down. I guess it's a mixture of both. I think the Berlin Wall coming down, the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union gives an opportunity to those of us on the Left to reassess what we believe in, what socialism is out of the shadow of totalitarianism and Stalinism... Where I am in my thinking at the moment is that I've stepped back from my ideological language, because the language we used during the Cold War may actually be past its "sell-by" date.'

Does this mean that one of Britain's best-known musician-agitators has given up on his beliefs? Absolutely not, explains Bragg firmly. 'We haven't abandoned what we believe in, but we must find a way to articulate it to the majority of people ... In the end, we have to make people understand that they can either live in a society based on a compassionate idea, or a society based purely on exploitation. From that we will build our new ideals.' ■

Finnish-born **Silja JA Talvi** now lives and works as a freelance writer in Seattle, Washington.

In the end, we have to make people understand that they can either live in a society based on a compassionate idea, or a society based purely on exploitation.

Billy Bragg: still ideologically politicized after all these years.

SILJA JA TALVI

Reviews

books

Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination
by **Adam Lively**
(Chatto & Windus, ISBN 0 7011 6244-9)

Kosovo: the evidence
by **Amnesty International**
(Amnesty International, ISBN 1873328211)

The Taliban
by **Peter Marsden**
(Zed Books, ISBN 1 85649 522 1)

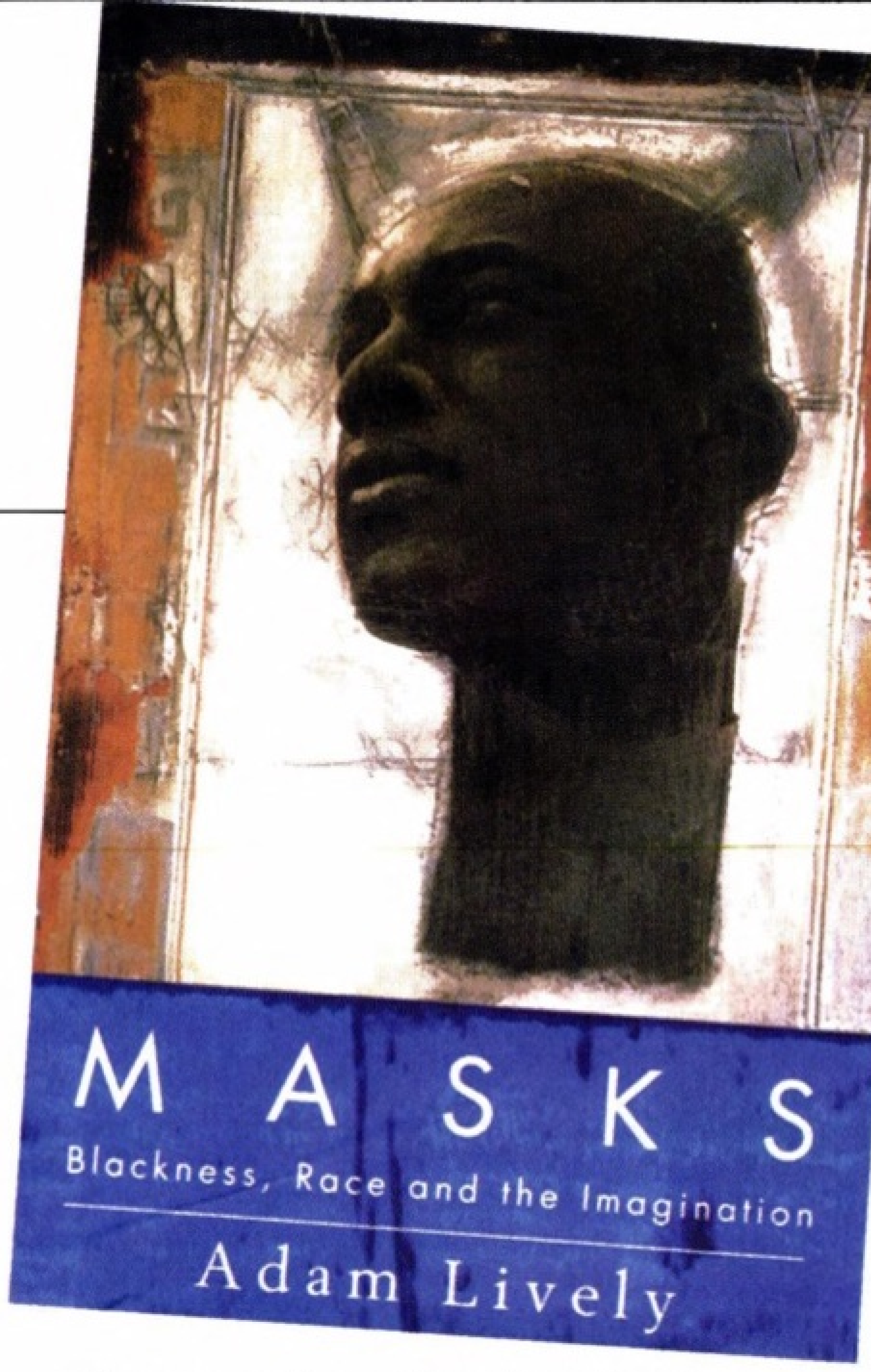
Bearing in mind that the idea of difference is central to discussions of race, polarities of opinion on the subject are inevitable. But race is of course more than just one idea and its evolution over the centuries has been complex.

If one is to take on the history of racial attitudes, then, according to writer Adam Lively in **Masks**, a simple division of the main actors into 'goodies and baddies… is a way of ignoring plurality and ambiguity'. Shades of grey don't seem to matter much to propagandist racism and anti-racism, but in truth many people's experience of racial issues can be ill-defined, multifaceted and contradictory.

Lively's book traces the influence of ideas of blackness and racial difference in the cultural life of Europe and the United States. Blackness for the purpose of his study is restricted to people of African origin. He focuses on literature – from eighteenth-century pseudoscientific tracts to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and beyond, with nods to music and the visual arts.

Early evolutionists often explained race in terms of chains of beings, moving from vegetable matter through ranks of animals to the European male, who stood at the top of the pile, closest to God. Black people were consequently dehumanized and the idea that they are somehow closer to nature is still current.

Writers both black and white in our own time have puzzled over such ultimately limiting ideas. WEB Du Bois would write of the 'double consciousness' of black people, typified by a sense of being observed, of looking at one's self through the eyes of white society. Blackness becomes a mask, whether it is the sentimentalist's idea of 'white', pure souls shining within black bodies, or the reductive mask of savagery and stupidity; whether it is the schizophrenic experience of 'passing' for white recorded by numerous black authors, or the reclamation of the term 'nigger' by rappers. Lively sees the contemporary concern with 'the slipperiness of identity' gaining sustenance from black cultural traditions of 'plurality, flexibility, parody'. The issue at the heart of this book is otherness, and at a time when alienation has become commonplace, Lively's argument for the centrality of black experience in cultural creation carries undeniable weight.



Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ DG

The use of ethnic difference to crush others has been, in recent months, all too painfully experienced in the province of Kosovo. But as Amnesty International's timely book **Kosovo: the evidence** shows, Serbian oppression of ethnic Albanians has actually been going on for at least a decade. Since 1987 police torture and ill-treatment, killings and unfair trials and detentions have become commonplace.

While Amnesty's call for urgent

music

Pulling No Punches
by **Velvet Fist** *(Velvet Fist 1 CD)*

Rock the Dock
by **Various** *(Creation CRECD 240)*

The first album, **Pulling No Punches**, is made on a shoestring by a 12-strong *a capella* choir of feminists; while **Rock the Dock**, featuring the cream of Britain's current rock scene, pulls together 16 bands whose collective earnings stretch into the multi-millions. The first doesn't even have a proper label and it's self-distributed; the second comes from the mighty indie rock stable that nurtured Primal Scream and Oasis. By rights, these two releases are poles apart. And yet they're not. United by a spirit of justified righteousness they represent a spirit of community and direct action that doesn't seem to count for much in today's mainstream music industry.

Coming from good, old-fashioned socialist roots, London-based Velvet Fist have performed their songs — some wryly amusing, others with undoubted power — at CND rallies, peace groups, various Labour Party events. They are an ongoing project, whereas **Rock the Dock** is very much an ad hoc one designed to raise money to support the 500 Liverpool dockers sacked in 1995 and address the problems that their community faces.

Non-profit making records – and the music contained – have an honourable history. The last 20 years have seen various movements wedding themselves to musical bandwagons. Band Aid is, its paternalist discourses aside, an obvious example; Red Wedge and the punk-led Rock Against Racism and Anti-Nazi League are others.

But the exemplar, in many ways, is the response that artists and musicians gave to the British miners' strike in the mid-1980s. Organizing benefit after benefit, often in the afflicted villages, it engendered an extraordinary spirit of kinship with many people being changed for ever after. **Pulling No Punches** harks back to these days. One track does so explicitly: 'No Going Back' is a strong call for a recognition of workers' and women's rights. Others address different topics, including the well-observed 'Good Intentions': a Velvet Fist-penned number dealing with the way we identify with oppression.

velvet fist
VF
Pulling no punches

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

It's no surprise to find that the link figure on both records is Billy Bragg, who's recently recorded a collection of Woody Guthrie songs. Fist's rendition of Bragg's wording to the 'Internationale' is a vigorous affair, but to get the man himself, turn to **Rock the Dock**, where he's singing out: 'Never Cross A Picket Line'. And if that's not good enough, flip through live tracks from Oasis, Dodgy and the Chemical Bothers with some fearsomely great moments from songwriter Beth Orton and a surprisingly quiescent Chumbawumba. Something for everyone.

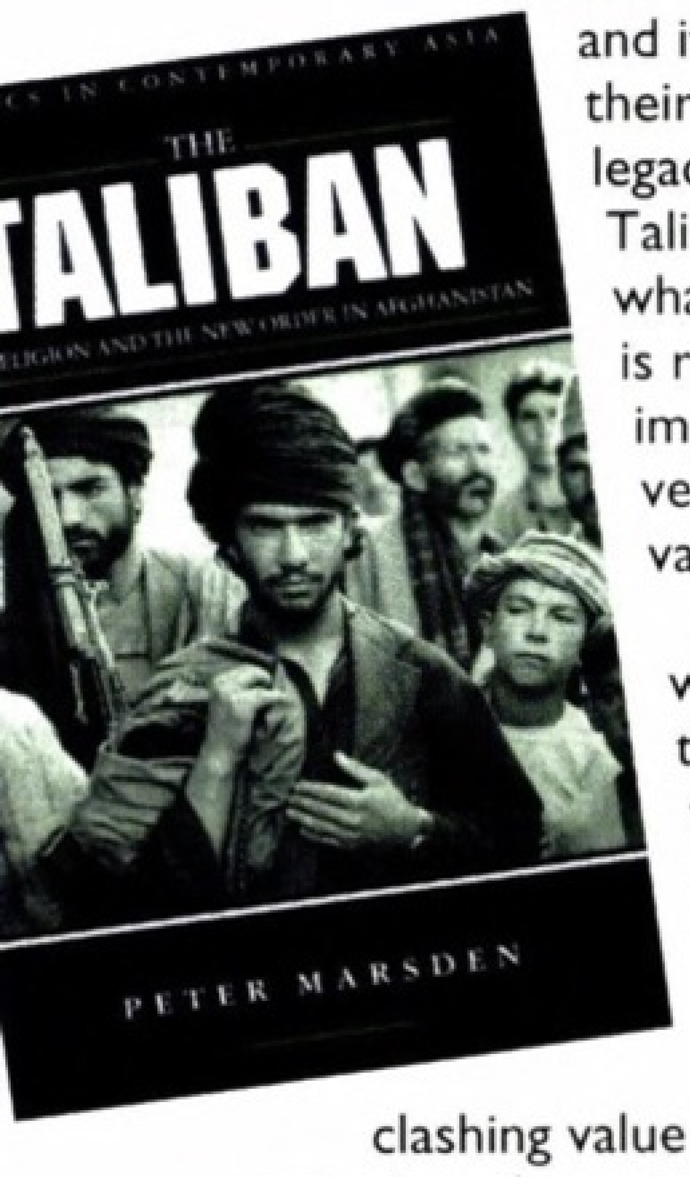
Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ LG

Pulling No Punches is available from 18 Oakington Avenue, Wembley Park, Middlesex HA9 8HZ, UK.

international action to bring the perpetrators to justice is measured and useful, ultimately this book will, and should, arouse feelings of pain, anger and outrage.
Politics ☆☆☆☆☆

Also providing essential background and context to a current crisis is Peter Marsden's excellent **The Taliban**. Subtitled **War, religion and the new order in Afghanistan**, it takes us behind the stereotypes to explore not only what the Taliban is and how it has come to power, but also the knot of issues it raises for Afghanistan, its neighbours and the rest of the world.

For the human-rights conscious international community, the continued and institutionalized denial of basic health and education rights to women and girls has resulted in humanitarian agencies like UNICEF closing down their Afghanistan programmes. Should the Taliban be officially recognized at all, some Westerners ask?



However, the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban is, in part, the creation of the superpowers who meddled, intervened and used Afghanistan and its people to serve their own ends. The legacy is a mess. The Taliban argues that what it is trying to do is restore order by imposing (its own version of) Muslim values.

Marsden picks his way carefully and thoughtfully through the minefield that is his subject matter. He untangles the thorny issue of clashing value systems, but also recognizes the part that self-interest has to play for all the main actors, regardless of their moral proclamations. There are no easy solutions, he readily admits, but he does have suggestions on how to negotiate with the Taliban in a way that might bring about positive change. The prime requisite is good information. This book provides the best launch pad for an understanding of what's going on in Afghanistan.
Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆ VB

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

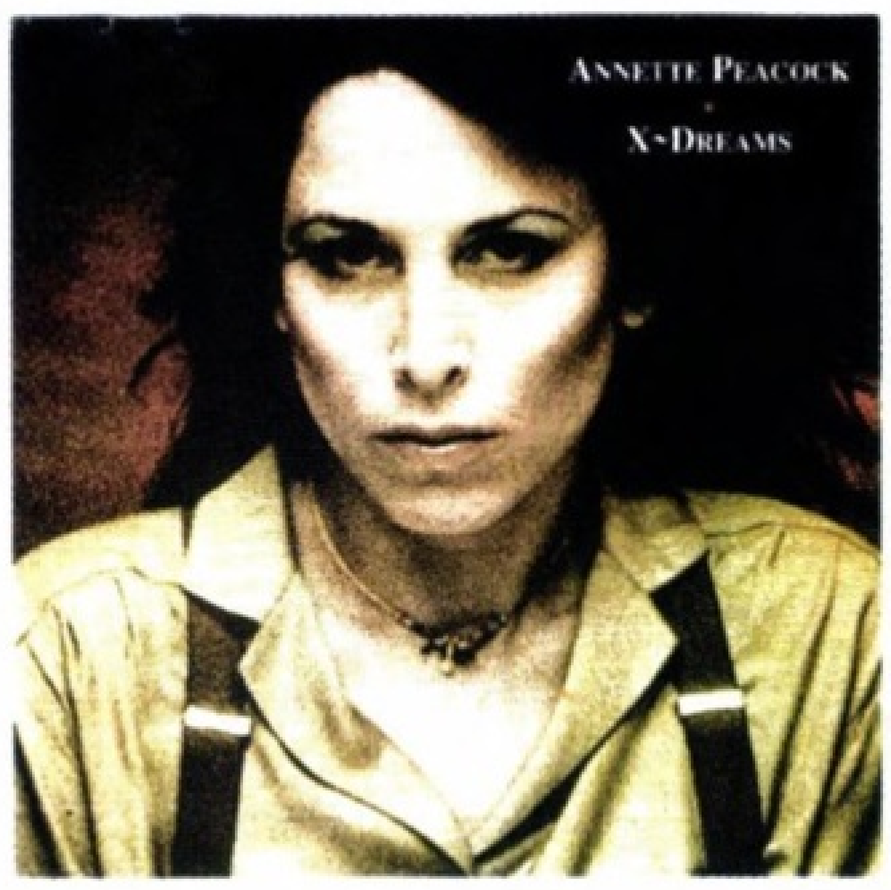
THE CLASSIC

Annette Peacock

... being the elusive interpreter of freedom.

'Huh, what happened there?' was my reaction to the first Annette Peacock song I heard. The song in question, 'My Mama Never Taught Me How To Cook' (from **X-Dreams**, 1978), terrifyingly conflates sex, love and power, and yet makes you want to cheer out aloud by its end. On the serpentine coils of its instrumental phrasing, Peacock travels the distance from a humorous take on her lack of domestic skills that have made her a social outlaw, to the things men want to teach her – the destruction of self-esteem and trust, and the routine expectation of sexual servitude. The latter ventriloquized in her best sultry manner to chilling effect.

Eventually she finds her own voice, gentle and direct, to observe: 'My destiny is not to serve/ I'm a woman/ My destiny is to create.' The song suddenly unravels with some freeflowing sax and you're left wondering how she managed to pull off such twists and turns.



Annette Peacock is one of those rare singers who seem quite naturally to make their own paths – and pay the price of commercial obscurity. Her freeform songs have all the coherence of classical lieder, despite mercurial changes in emotional and musical mood. A self-taught musician, her hallmarks are elusive, unsettling melodies that beg for repeated listening, an ability – as critic Art Lange put it – to 'invoke intensity through subtraction', and an unflinching take on relationships worthy of a metaphysical poet.

Launched into the jazz circuit in 1962 with a stint in Albert Ayler's band, she left to concentrate on her own work. After pioneering performance with synthesizers, she turned down David Bowie's offer to play for him, preferring to study composition at the Juilliard School of Music. Brooklyn-born, she moved to Britain, living on the breadline, and released her albums through her own Ironic label. A few years ago, she returned to the US, and after a lengthy absence from the music scene is reported to be working on new material.

In many of her songs she articulates the need both to cherish love and have no illusions about it. Within a few words and notes the mood can change from complete engagement, whether ecstatic or disheartened, to a wry, philosophical detachment – and back!

I Have No Feelings (1986) explores this territory in tiny, miraculous songs, virtual hypnotic states anchored by Roger Turner's perfectly judged free percussion. At the beginning of 'The Carousel' Peacock reveals that the reason why relationships can damage us is the fact that we enter them unrehearsed. However, this is not to deny love its power for 'since I fell/ for love like a child/ it drives me wild'. Indeed rehearsal is to be avoided, as in another song the spark is missing and the lovers are locked in a desperate game. The woman wonders, as she suffers her partner's endless caressing, whether he is also acting his loving.

Sex for Peacock can be a unifying, natural force; indeed her ecological beliefs are sometimes expressed in sexual terms. It is also the matrix for holding a wide range of political meanings. In one song she advises, only half in jest, that as women have sexual as well as numerical power over men, they should withhold sex until the nukes are done away with. The title of 'A Loss of Consciousness' (from **The Perfect Release**, 1979) refers to people who use lovemaking to blot out engagement with wider political issues. While realizing that 'life's hopeful between the thighs', she seems to grapple constantly with how socially-constructed gender inequality plays itself out in the sexual arena. In 'Rubber Hunger', the heroine goes down to The Hardware Store to get some Plastic-fantastic to pleasure herself with, declaring 'I'm gonna make my own rules'. And in 'Happy With My Hand' (from **Abstract-Contact**, 1988), a relationship-weary Peacock sings, 'I get no stress/from my own caress'. 'Real & Defined Androgens' (**X-Dreams**) picks up the masturbatory theme from the male point of view, in a prolonged, chundering rock progression. The man is 'oiling his machine', looking at 'air-brushed dreams of perfection' that distort reality. And yet at the moment of orgasm, there is a certain empathy – 'We are all slaves to this release/ we reach/ but never possess.' The song dissolves in a piano spill.

The summation of Peacock's political beliefs is probably the 14-minute rap 'Elect Yourself' (**Abstract-Contact**) in which she rails against the greed ethic and its commodification of 'innocence and enthusiasm', against the refusal of Christians in the US to condemn capitalism, against the selling of ecological rights and the loss of true democracy. Observing that 'we are intrinsically, intimately alone inside our insistent skin,' she ends with the sad reflection: 'Once upon a time there was a people.'

Her enduring contribution to the craft of song is freedom, which is also her prime subject. ■

Dinyar Godrej

Sadly only **X-Dreams** and **The Perfect Release** are available (from See For Miles records) at present.

Reviews

film

The Truman Show

directed by **Peter Weir**
(Paramount Pictures)

'I'm thinking about getting out,' says insurance salesman Truman Burbank to his best friend. Who among us has not voiced that thought or felt that everyone is conspiring against us? But for Truman the move to another city or country – his fantasy destination is Fiji – will be more difficult than for many.

Truman is the star of the longest running TV show in history, now into its thirtieth year – more than 10,000 days non-stop, around the clock. He's in a documentary where he is the subject. But he himself remains in the dark about this because everything around him is manufactured so that he will live a normal life that we can observe.

Truman's oddly perfect home is an island community called Seahaven (based on an actual place called Seaside, Florida). Both the real place and Truman's world are model communities aspiring to the ideals and aesthetic of small-town US. The streets are narrow and traffic-free, the houses set close together. Everyone knows one another. But what may have its middle-class virtues in Florida, becomes in the film a cloying and sinister place totally oppressive even to its star citizen.

Weir's film is not the first to satirize life in idyllic small towns. Neither will the references to Shakespeare's *Tempest* be lost on an audience educated in Western classics. The new twist here is the way in which the critiques of town life and TV get mixed together, giving us actors as villains, conspiring with the audience to deceive the non-actor star. It's the complete paranoid dystopia.

In an age where Internet surfers were recently treated to the first 'live' birth and another virtual couple, and their agent, have promised the first 'on-camera conception', Truman's birth ('seen live by hundreds of millions') and his first steps ('seen in 92 countries') may not seem far-fetched. In fact, Canada's Dionne Quintuplets really did live this nightmare in the 1930s. Yanked from their parents and made wards of the State, then set up in a fantasy-town amusement park known as Quint-Land, the young girls were seen by millions of tourists and in constant newsreels.

The Truman Show follows a long line of Hollywood films that satirize television. It's an easy target, a symbol for much that is wrong with US society. TV is presented as shallow and manipulative, wedded to a moronic and passive audience. Although the audience within the film roots for Truman, it is also titillated by the deception played on him.

All cinema and TV create an illusion of reality. **The Truman Show**'s satire of that illusion might, however, help an audience question the extremes of dominant cinema.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ PS

Reviewers:
Dinyar Godrej, Louise Gray, Peter Steven
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The **NI** Crossword

No. 28 by Axe

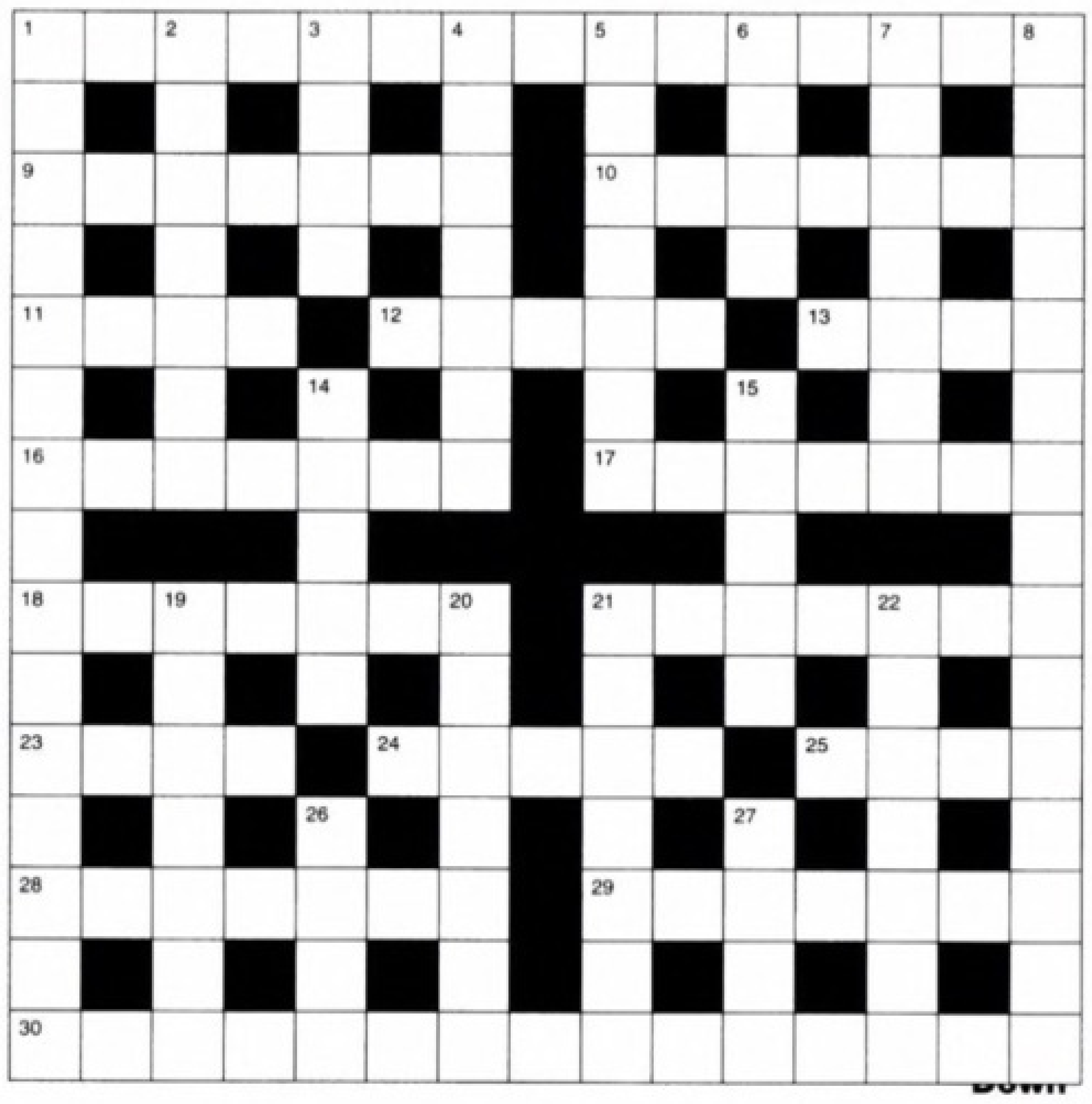
CRYPTIC

Across

1 Cleaner lacking cohesion about the king is really an endangered species (5,10)
9 Very deep bay tragically immerses ship in the Spanish retreat (7)
10 Statesman – or woman or little boy – follow north (7)
11 Ship's body from Yorkshire (4)
12 African country is sympathetic, but without gravity (5)
13 Hawk which has the wind to fly? (4)
16 Commentate on election procedure (7)
17 Lord Bath lost old seat in Greenland (7)
18 Languedoc, n'est-ce pas? (7)
21 Dotty aunt in Virginia university package to Pacific country (7)
23 Aching back of the archer (4)
24 Anise blend found in Tuscany... (5)
25 ...from lilies gathered by herbal oenologists' group (4)
28 I strike within – all right to back a leading emperor (7)
29 Antony's wife appears before the end of Augustus' original term (7)
30 League key to site of nuclear accident (5,4,6)

Down

1 It sounds as if prediction could be either clear or hazy (7,8)
2 Arcadian is charming! (7)
3 The last word in 30 sees queen leaving for the orient (4)
4 Most blessed, most flawed, did you say? (7)
5 Bread chant seen before the French left Chinese city (7)
6 Bubbly Spanish states (4)
7 Salmon from the communist angle (7)
8 Swansong – removes the last item – having starred in famous Strip! (6,9)
14 Cabal sprang originally from the Joint United Nations Treaty Association (5)
15 Former British protectorate given to a Native American (5)
19 Crook takes credit for trapping little girl (7)
20 West African turns up under rainstorm in East Africa (7)
21 Change Devon and me – for a place in the Loire Valley:... (7)
22 ... ornate villa with scattered gold bank deposits! (7)
26 Lloyd Webber wrote for this serial, they say (4)
27 Separatists' flunkies in Japan (4)



QUICK

Across

1 Ceratotherium simum – African grazing animal on the endangered list (5,10)
9 Bottomless – especially relating to ocean depths (7)
10 Citizen of the 36th US state (1864) (7)
11 Yorkshire river giving the popular name of its outport (4)
12 West African country, capital Porto Novo (5)
13 Long-tailed member of the hawk family (4)
16 Narrate (7)
17 Danish, and former, name for Nuuk, capital of Greenland (7)
18 Language of the Midi and Provence (7)
21 Chain of islands, now a republic, formerly the New Hebrides (7)
23 Greek god, Roman equivalent Cupid (4)
24 Italian city whose ferruginous earth gives its name to a painting pigment (5)
25 Member of the lily family, juice of the leaves used in cosmetics (4)
28 Japanese emperor since 1989 (7)
29 Sister of Augustus and wife of Mark Antony (7)
30 Town on the Susquehana River in Pennsylvania, the site of a nuclear accident in 1979 (5,4,6)

Down

1 Although regular in Britain from 1861 and the US from 1871, the very first is credited to William Merlee of Oxford in 1337 (7,8)
2 Pastoral or peaceful (7)
3 Where the sun rises at the equinox (4)
4 Purest, most sanctimonious (7)
5 Current name for the Chinese city of Nanking or Nankeen (7)
6 Spanish sparkling wine (4)
7 The genus Sebastes, or a male salmon after spawning (7)
8 Road, 48km long, linking Los Angeles with the Pacific (6,9)
14 Spanish grand council of state, or military government (5)
15 North American culture centred on Ohio after 500 BC (5)
19 Bishop's crook (7)
20 Capital of Kenya (7)
21 Largest town on the (le) Loir, a major tributary of the (la) Loire (7)
22 Riverine deposits and silts (7)
26 Grass grain grown in the Camargue and Po Valley, inter alia (4)
27 They were of the lowest Japanese class (4)

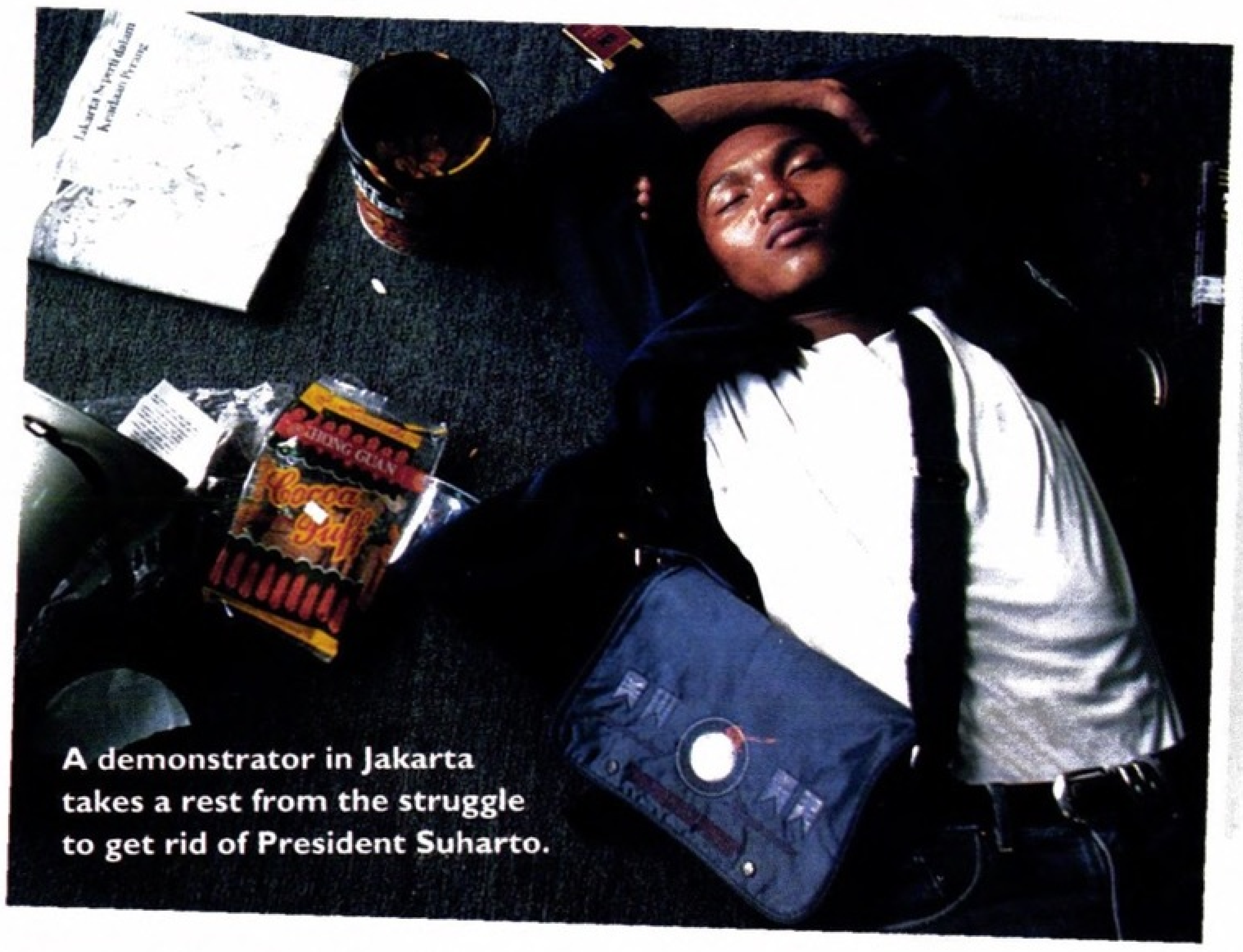
C	A	P	E	O	F	G	O	O	D	H	O	P	E	■
A	■	R	■	■	■	O	■	H	■	A	■	R	■	A
L	E	E	S	■	P	R	I	M	O	R	D	I	A	L
V	■	S	■	C	■	I	■	S	■	O	■	M	■	A
I	R	I	S	H	E	L	K	■	■	L	E	E	D	S
N	■	D	■	R	■	L	■	■	■	D	■	■	■	K
C	R	E	M	O	N	A	■	■	S	W	A	B	I	A
O	■	N	■	N	■	S	■	M	■	I	■	A	■	N
O	U	T	F	O	X	■	■	I	S	L	A	N	D	S
L	■	■	■	M	■	■	■	N	■	S	■	G	■	P
I	S	E	R	E	■	■	D	I	N	O	S	A	U	R
D	■	R	■	T	■	T	■	S	■	N	■	L	■	U
G	E	O	D	E	S	I	S	T	S	■	B	O	A	C
E	■	D	■	R	■	T	■	E	■	■	■	R	■	E
■	S	E	I	S	M	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	R	S

Reformasi or survival

Jeremy Seabrook reports from the Indonesian eye of the global economic storm.

INDONESIA after the departure of President Suharto is a turbulent, troubled place. Modest political freedoms have been conceded by Habibie, his successor, but these have taken place at a time of unimaginable economic hardship. Political parties are being formed – there are now over 60 of them. Workers have some rights – so long desired, so long suspended – to organize. But these small advances are in danger of being overtaken by unemployment, poverty and hunger in the wake of the devaluation of the rupiah by 80 per cent and the shrinking of the Indonesian economy this year by at least 15 per cent.

Jakarta has been made a restless, volatile place. There are daily demonstrations, incidents: students demand the ousting of Habibie, who is seen as the defender of the Suharto legacy; workers protest at price rises which make one meal a day a luxury; the unemployed desperately seek some work for themselves in the formal economy. In front of the Aryaduta Hotel hundreds of young men, working for money-changers, stop passing cars with the promise of 11,000 rupiah to the US dollar. Elsewhere, at traffic lights, boys in ragged jeans and coloured bandannas sing to cheap guitars while children stand in the swirling exhaust fumes offering comics, lighters, cigarettes, from nine in the morning till seven at night, for the sake of a dollar. At one point, jobs were disappearing in Jakarta at the rate of 15,000 a day. No industry is unaffected. Only the machines in the garment factories are still humming away making cheap clothing for export.



A demonstrator in Jakarta takes a rest from the struggle to get rid of President Suharto.

LUC DELAHAYE / MAGNUM

It is impossible to exaggerate the plight of the workers. They live in tiny shared rooms in overbuilt slum areas, with bare plastic floor-coverings, hard mats for sleeping, a canvas zip-up wardrobe, a mirror, a lipstick and a tin of baby-powder the closest thing they have to luxury.

> *At one point, jobs were disappearing in Jakarta at the rate of 15,000 a day*

Wati, deserted by her husband, has sent her three children back to her West Java village to stay with her parents while she shares a room with two others, each paying two dollars a month out of a salary of twenty dollars, most of which must be sent to the village. Many have reduced their consumption of food to levels that are dangerously low in nutrients – a bowl of noodles and vegetables, some rice with chili and salt.

Even while work was assured, workers lived on the edge of subsistence, the factories guarded by the military to prevent them from combining or organizing in any way. This was the incentive for foreign capital. Taiwanese, Korean or Singaporean subcontractors were drawn here by abnormally low wages which made labour costs in Indonesia among the lowest in the world.

What happens to people who have entered the market economy only recently when they are ejected from it so brutally?

Some have returned to their villages, even though it was the inadequate livelihood there that drove them to the city in the first place. As a result, the crisis has been exported to the countryside. There has been sporadic unrest here, too, as the unemployed join with poor farmers and workers – a powerful coalition against the mismanagement of government which, despite the removal of Suharto, remains fundamentally unchanged.

The family still manages to absorb the poverty of its members who had scattered in search of a better life: Parlin, returned from the oil-palm plantation in Kalimantan to live with his brother in Jakarta; Susanto, depending on the wages his wife draws from the Nike factory; Razak, sacked from five different industries for organizing the workers; the extended family of Mayu, waiting each month for the money she sends from Singapore, where she is a maidservant; Waranto, subsidized by the friend with whom he shares a cell-like room in Ancol.

Economic disruption has a profound effect on all areas of social life. Triatni, a metal worker, is still unmarried although he is aged over 30. 'I couldn't survive with a wife,' he says, 'and could not afford to feed any children on the wage I am earning.' Many young people cannot think of marrying. This suggests the destruction of hopes and expectations on a large scale, as well as creating an expanding sex industry, with all its attendant social and economic costs.

The great majority of young people who came to Jakarta to work were reluctant migrants in the first place. They would not have left the village if there had been a choice. As it is, many are reluctant to return or even to tell their families that the hope of a secure job has been disappointed and that they are barely surviving in the alien, unchosen environment of the city.

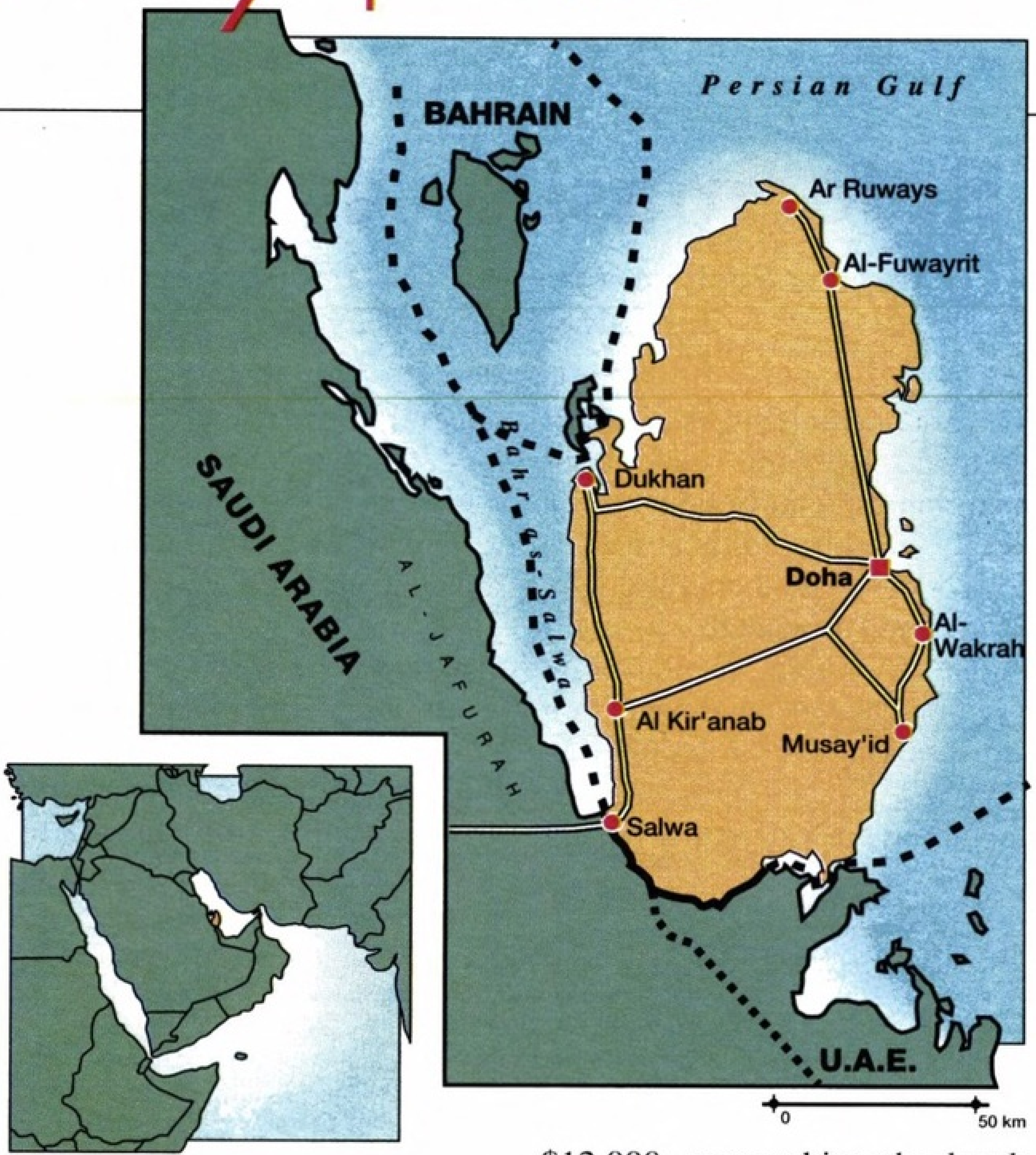
The situation is untenable: women sweep up the rice-grains along with the dust from the roadside near the warehouses; people scavenge among the waste from restaurants. A Government which could pursue dissenters to the remotest hiding-places in Indonesia cannot bring the necessities of life to its wanting people.

Is this by design, as some believe, so that the inevitable disorder can be used as a new excuse for the military to clamp down once more? Or will a revolt that is barely containable announce the beginning of true reform? The tension on the streets is tangible, as the desire for social and political change is undermined by a desperate struggle against hunger and destitution. ■

Jeremy Seabrook is a regular contributor to the **NI**.

Country profile

Qatar



ITEM WORLD GUIDE 1996/97

QATAR is something of an enigma even by the standards of the Gulf Arab states. A peninsula some 11,400 square kilometres in area (about half the size of Wales), it has a population of barely half a million, over half of whom live in and around the capital, Doha. Less than half are native Qatari citizens, the remainder being migrant workers from elsewhere in the Arab world, the Indian Subcontinent, the Philippines and Europe. It is a hot, humid place, with little natural vegetation. The interior is largely desert.

Like the other members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Qatar is an absolute monarchy. Its present ruler, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, overthrew his father, Shaykh Khalifa, in a bloodless palace coup in June 1995. As his ancestors have done since the mid-nineteenth century, Shaykh Hamad rules by decree. Most of his cabinet are members of the ruling Al-Thani family. It came as rather a surprise, therefore, when last year Shaykh Hamad announced that Qataris would soon have the chance to elect a municipal authority. Even more remarkable was his statement that women would be allowed both to vote and stand as candidates.

In compensation for the lack of participation in government, Qatari citizens have enjoyed one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in the world. Education, healthcare and even housing are largely free, and the prices of water, electricity and most basic foodstuffs are heavily subsidized by the State.

The decline in oil prices in recent years has affected the economy, but Qataris still enjoy a per-capita GNP of around $12,000, approaching the levels of Spain and Aotearoa/New Zealand. While oil still dominates the economy – proven reserves are 3,700 million barrels, which should last about 18 years at current rates of production — Qatar is investing heavily in natural-gas production to ensure its future prosperity. It has one of the largest gas fields in the world, which should go on producing for over 100 years. And, unlike oil, natural gas is supplied direct to the end-user by pipeline and is sold *en bloc* at a set price, so that it is free from the fluctuations of the market.

One country with which Qatar has been negotiating the sale of gas for some time is Israel. So far the political risk of such a deal has held Qatar back, but Israel has a trade office in Doha and Israeli firms are active in the emirate, supplying irrigation expertise and equipment and security apparatus. The relationship with Israel typifies Qatar's refusal to toe the Gulf states' line on foreign policy: it has always been something of a maverick in the foreign-policy field. It was the first Gulf emirate to open diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1988. It is on good terms with both Iran and Iraq, much to the displeasure of its neighbours.

Indeed, it seems to derive satisfaction from rocking the regional boat. Qatar has consistently refused GCC mediation in its territorial dispute with neighbouring Bahrain, preferring instead to take the case to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. And in announcing the municipal elections last year Shaykh Hamad could not resist a dig at his GCC neighbours, blaming the absence of democracy there for retarding economic development in the region. ■

Steve Sherman

AT A GLANCE

THE QATAR MONETARY
FIFTY RIYALS

CHRISTINE OSBORNE / CAMERA PRESS

Leader: Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Economy: GNP per capita: $11,600

Monetary unit: Riyal.

Main exports: crude oil (87%) and natural gas.

Main imports: machinery and transport equipment (42%); manufactured goods (20%).

People: 558,000.

Health: Infant mortality 17 per 1,000 live births (Israel 8 per 1,000).

Culture: Over half the population are expatriate workers, many of them Levantine and Egyptian Arabs. Native Qataris are descended from Bedouin from Najd with a small contingent of Iranian origin.

Religion: Most Qataris are Sunni Muslims who follow the conservative Wahhabi doctrine.

Language: Arabic.

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

***Sources** Europa Middle East and North Africa Yearbook, 1996; The State of the World's Children 1998; The Middle East Review 1997.*

Last profiled January 1987

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★
Good among Qatari citizens, but considerable variation among expatriate workers.
1987 ★★★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★
No need for aid or debt but virtually everything, except fuel, is imported.
1987 ★★★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Entitled to free education, but far fewer employment opportunities than men. Are soon to be allowed to vote.
1987 ★★

LITERACY ★★★
79% (Saudi Arabia 63%, Bahrain 85%). Primary enrolment is also around 80%.
1987 ★★★

FREEDOM ★★★
Nowhere near as repressive as many of its neighbours. No significant domestic opposition but no political institutions either.
1987 ★★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★
71 years (United Arab Emirates 75 years, US 76 years).
1987 ★★★★

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★★
The Government appears to be committed to opening up the country. After over a century of rule by an absolute monarchy, the municipal elections planned for next year are a welcome development which should set an example for Qatar's neighbours.

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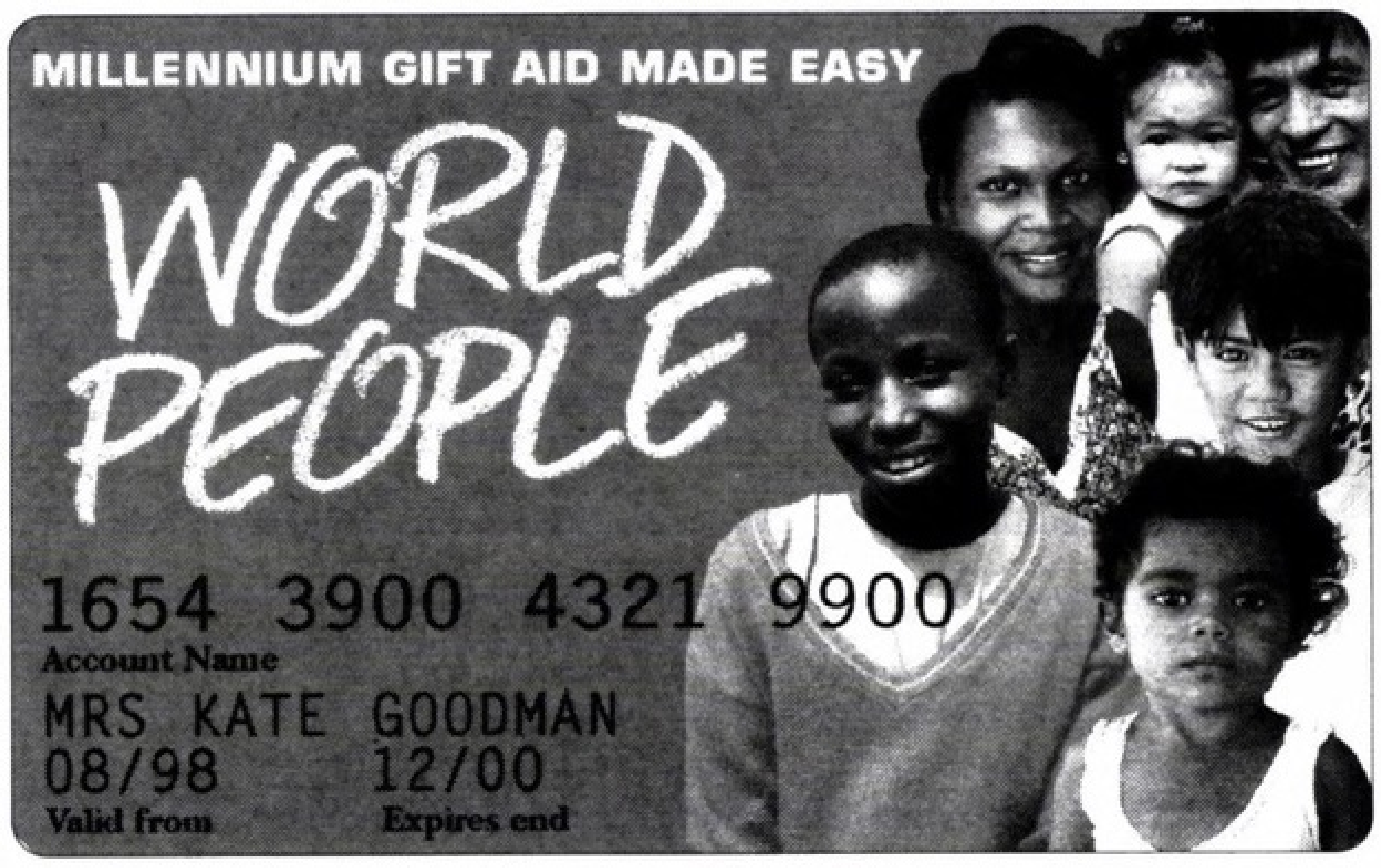

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- **Above** Shining day and silvery night, idealized picture embroideries of day and night-time scenes. ***Shining day*** with sun and playful animals 08875 **£12.95**; ***Silvery night*** with moon and animals resting 08876 **£12.95**.
- **Left** ***Four Peacocks*** 08871 **£12.95**.

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- **Above right** ***Blue zigger*** 08865 **£12.95** Also available in ***green*** 08866 **£12.95.**
- **Right** ***Green zappo*** 08869 **£12.95.** Also available in ***blue*** 08868 **£12.95.**
- **Right top corner** ***Red vine*** **24"/60cm 08752 £19.50; 16"/40cm 08753 £12.95.**
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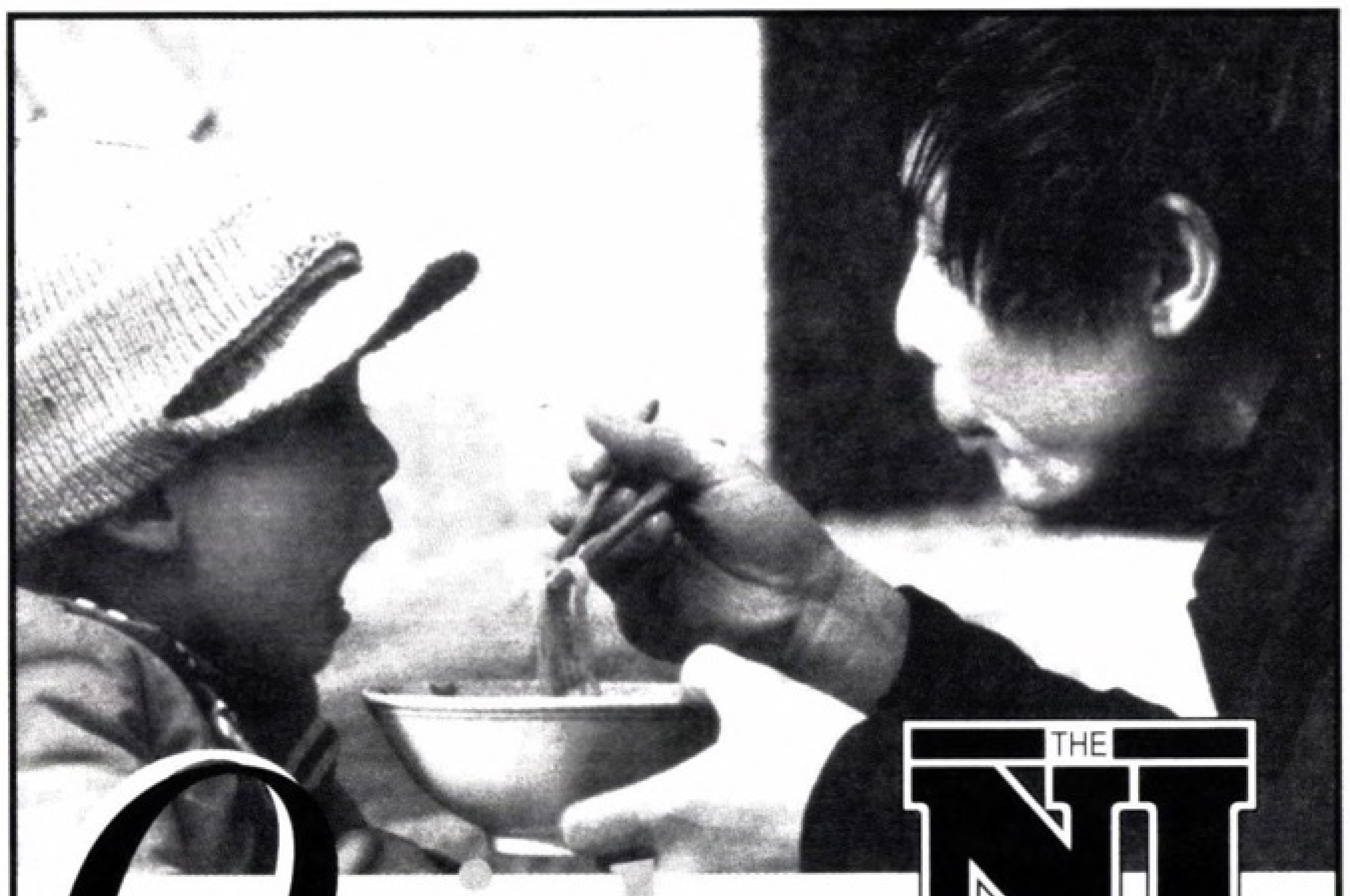

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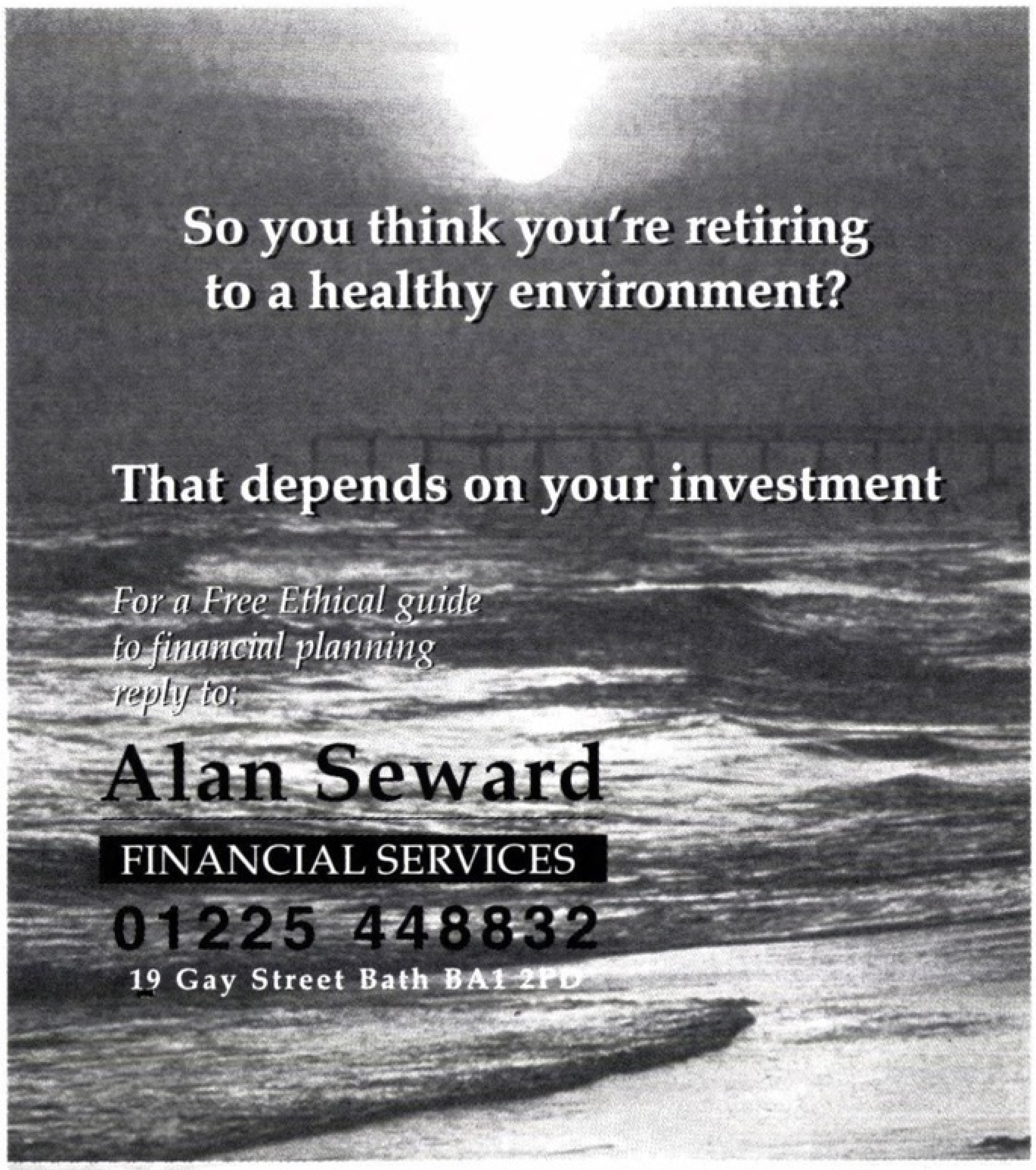

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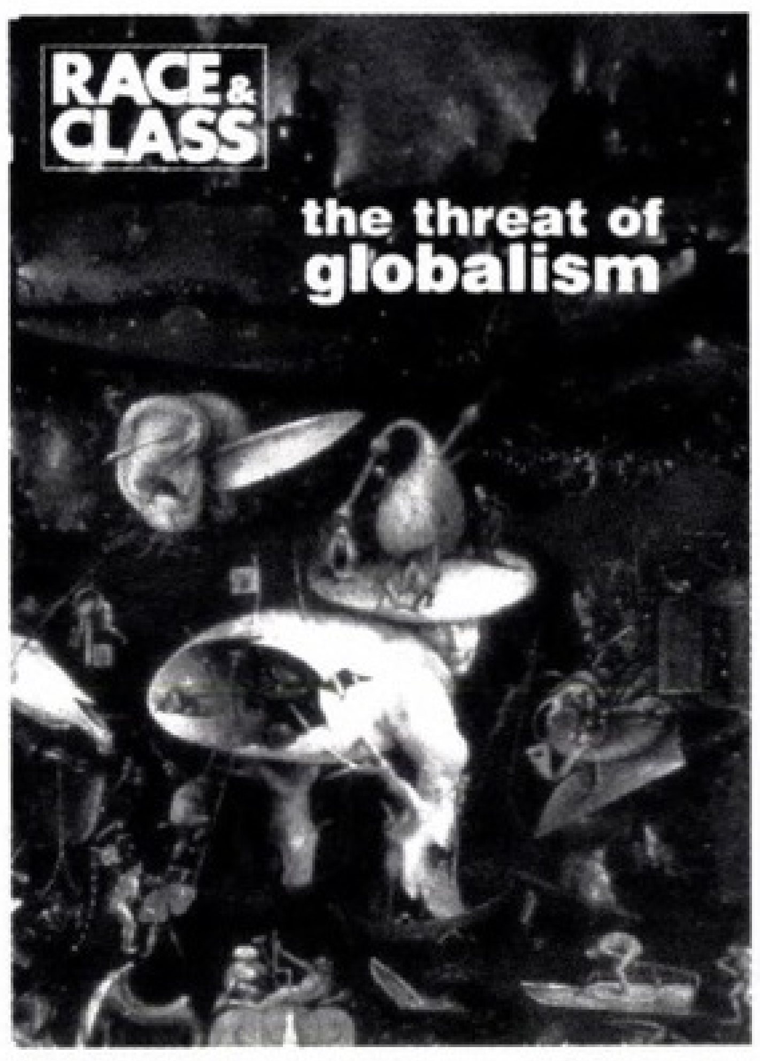

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